

# CATHOLIC SOLDIER HANDBOOK

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## THE PROFESSION OF FAITH

TWO CREEDS occupy a special place in the Church's life: the Apostles' Creed and the Nicene Creed.

### APOSTLES' CREED

The Apostles' Creed—so called because it is rightly considered to be a faithful summary of the apostles' faith—is the ancient baptismal symbol of the Church of Rome. Its great authority arises from this fact: it is the oldest Roman catechism, “the Creed of the Roman Church, the See of Peter, the first of the apostles, to which he brought the common faith” (CCC 194). Numbers in the text below indicate the division in twelve articles, on which is based the legendary tradition which attributes it to the twelve apostles.

I BELIEVE in God, the Father almighty, creator of heaven and earth (1). And in Jesus Christ, His only Son, our Lord (2), who was conceived by the Holy Spirit, born of the Virgin Mary (3), suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, died and was buried; He went down to the dead (4). On the third day He rose again from the dead (5). He ascended to the heavens, and is seated at the right hand of God, the Father almighty (6), where-from He shall come again to judge the living and the dead (7). I believe in the Holy Spirit (8), the Holy Catholic Church, the communion of saints (9), the forgiveness of sins (10), the resurrection of the body (11), and the life everlasting (12).

### NICENE CREED

The Nicene Creed draws its great authority from the fact that it stems from the first two ecumenical Councils (in 325 and 381). It remains common to all the great Churches of both East and West to this day (CCC 195).

WE believe in one God, the Father, the Almighty, maker of heaven and earth, of all that is seen and unseen. We believe in one Lord, Jesus Christ, the only Son of God, eternally begotten of from Light, true God from true the Father, God from God, Light

God, begotten, not made, one in Being with the Father. Through him all things were made. For us men and for our salvation he came down from heaven: by the power of the Holy Spirit he was born of the Virgin Mary, and became man. For our sake he was crucified under Pontius Pilate, he suffered, died, and was buried. On the third day he rose again in fulfillment of the Scriptures; he ascended into heaven and is seated at the right hand of the Father. He will come again in glory to judge the living and the dead, and his kingdom will have no end. We believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord, the giver of life, who proceeds from the Father and the Son. With the Father and the Son he is worshiped and glorified. He has spoken through the Prophets. We believe in one holy catholic and apostolic Church. We acknowledge one baptism for the forgiveness of sins. We look for the resurrection of the dead, and the life of the world to come. Amen.

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THIS synthesis of faith was not made to accord with human opinions, but rather what was of the greatest importance was gathered from all the Scriptures, to present the one teaching of the faith in its entirety. And just as the mustard seed contains a great number of branches in a tiny grain, so too this summary of faith encompassed in a few words the whole knowledge of the true religion contained in the Old and New Testaments.

—St. Cyril of Jerusalem (315-386)

## PRAYERS BEFORE AND AFTER MASS

O LORD, look with mercy upon me;  
hear my prayer.  
Grant me a humble and contrite heart—  
the determined purpose that will bring me to salvation:  
the amendment of my life,  
the perseverance in good.  
Grant that your body and blood  
which I intend to receive,  
although I am unworthy,  
be for me the remission of my sins,  
the washing away of my guilt,  
the end of my evil thoughts,  
and the rebirth of my better instincts.  
May it incite me to do the works pleasing to you  
and profitable to my health of body and soul,  
and be a firm defense against the wiles of my enemies.  
Amen.

—St. Ambrose (340-397), Prayer of Preparation for Mass [Adapted]

O JESUS, meek and humble of heart, Hear me.  
From the desire of being esteemed, Deliver me, O Jesus.  
From the desire of being loved, Deliver me, O Jesus.  
From the desire of being extolled, etc.  
From the desire of being honored,  
From the desire of being praised,  
From the desire of being preferred to others,  
From the desire of being consulted,  
From the desire of being approved,  
From the fear of being humiliated,  
From the fear of being despised,  
From the fear of suffering rebukes,  
From the fear of being calumniated,  
From the fear of being ridiculed,  
From the fear of being wronged,  
From the fear of being suspected, Deliver me, O Jesus.  
That others may be loved more than I,  
Jesus, grant me the grace to desire it.

That others may be esteemed more than I,  
Jesus, grant me the grace to desire it.  
That in the opinion of the world,  
others may increase and I may decrease, etc.  
That others may be chosen and I set aside,  
That others may be praised and I unnoticed,  
That others may be preferred to me in everything,  
That others become holier than I,  
provided that I may become as holy as I should,  
Jesus, grant me the grace to desire it.

Amen.

—Cardinal Merry del Val (1865-1930)

O LORD Jesus Christ,  
let your passion be my strength  
to sustain, guard, and protect me.  
Let your wounds be my food and drink  
to nourish, fill, and invigorate me.  
Let the shedding of your blood  
cleans me of all my sins.  
Let your death obtain eternal life for me  
and your cross lead me to everlasting glory.  
Let these constitute for me  
refreshment and joy,  
health and uprightness of heart.

—Pope St. Pius X (1835-1914)

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IN all he did from the Incarnation to the Cross, the end Jesus Christ had in mind was the gift of the Eucharist, his personal and corporal union with each Christian, through [Holy] Communion. He saw in it the means of communicating to us all the treasures of his passion, all the virtues of his sacred humanity, and all the merits of his life.

—St. Peter Julian Eymard (1811-1868)

## THE EUCHARIST

"FOR from the east to the west my name will be great among the nations. Incense and pure offerings will be offered in my name everywhere, for my name will be great among the nations," says the sovereign Lord.  
—Malachi 1:11-12

FOR as often as you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes.—1 Cor 11:26

THE Mass is at the heart of Christianity. The Eucharist is the greatest of the sacraments; it is "the source and summit of the Christian life" (Lumen Gentium, 11), for it contains Christ himself, whom the Father gave up for us all, and in whom he gives us all things (Rom 8:32). It is called the Sacrament of sacraments. "All the other sacraments are ordered to it as to their end" (CCC 1211). The other sacraments, and indeed all ecclesiastical ministries and works of the apostolate, are bound up with the Eucharist and are oriented toward it" (CCC 1324). For in the blessed Eucharist is contained the whole spiritual good of the Church, namely Christ himself. The Eucharist, as Christ's saving presence in the community of the faithful and its spiritual food, is the Church's most treasured possession.

Eucharist. The term Eucharist has two meanings: good grace and thanksgiving. Good grace because it first signifies eternal life; and also because it contains Christ the Lord, who is true grace and the fountain of all favors. Thanksgiving because each time the holy sacrifice of the Mass is offered, we give unbounded thanks to God for all His kindnesses towards us, and above all for so excellent a gift of His grace, which He grants to us in this Sacrament.

Holy Mass. While in the East the term liturgy survived as the name of the Eucharistic Sacrifice, in the West the word missa (Mass) gained the ascendancy. Missa refers to the dismissal of the members of the community, and it signifies the intent of graces offered/received: to sanctify the whole of our lives.

Institution. That Christ himself left us the Sacrament of the Eucharist is the clear and unequivocal teaching of Scripture and the

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THE faith of the Church is this: that one and identical is the Word of God and the son of Mary, who suffered on the Cross, who is present in the Eucharist, and who rules in Heaven.—Pope Pius XII (1876-1958)

Church. The institution took place at the Last Supper. The NT gives four accounts: the Antiochene tradition (1 Cor 11:23-25; Lk 22:14-20) and the Jerusalem-Palestinian tradition (Mk 14:22-25 and Mt 26:26-29). All accounts clearly attribute the institution to Christ. And according to Paul and Luke, the disciples are to repeat what Christ did—they are to repeat this sacred meal in memory of his death.

#### Effects.

The following is excerpted from *Christ—The Ideal of the Priest* (St. Louis, MO: B. Herder Co., 1952), pp. 179-223, by Abbot D. Columba Marmion:

By its divine institution the sacrifice of the Mass applies with the greatest abundance the graces and pardons which are the fruits of the sacrifice of the Cross. What are these fruits intended for our advantage and for that of the Church? These fruits are, first of all, an increase of grace. In addition, because the Mass is a sacrifice of propitiation, it satisfies for sin and disposes God to grant pardon and to extend his greatest mercies. Whatever our miseries, our weaknesses and our past may be, we must always have before our mind the declaration of the Council of Trent: "Rendered favorable by this oblation, the Lord, while bestowing his grace and the gift of repentance, grants pardon also for crimes and sins, however grave." Not that the holy sacrifice remits of itself the offences committed against God as does the sacrament of penance, but it obtains for us abundant graces of contrition and true repentance. Moreover, the Mass obtains for us also the remission of the temporal punishment due to sin. It is, therefore, a source of propitiation for the souls in purgatory as well as for us. And finally, can our petitions ever find such powerful support as during the holy sacrifice? The Father no longer considers our unworthiness, but He hears the voice of His Son pleading on our behalf. The power of impetration in the Mass is immeasurable. The blood of Abel called down the divine vengeance, but the blood of Jesus Christ implores, not punishment, but mercy and grace.

Actual sacramental reception of the Eucharist is certainly not necessary as a means to salvation (as is grace), for the newly baptized

who die are saved. But it is necessary by way of precept. Jesus' words, "Unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink His blood, you shall not have life in you" (Jn 6:54), would seem to impose a certain moral obligation upon those who know of this precept and for whom reception of the Sacrament is possible.

The following is a summary of the doctrine of the Eucharist:

- The Eucharist is the greatest of the sacraments; it is the source and summit of the Christian life (CCC 1324).
- The Eucharist is a true sacrament instituted by Christ at the Last Supper (CCC 1333).
- The sacrifice of Christ [at Calvary] and the sacrifice of the Eucharist are one single sacrifice: in the Mass, the same Christ who offered himself once in a bloody manner on the altar of the cross is contained and offered in an unbloody manner (CCC 1367).
- The Mass is at the same time, and inseparably, the sacrificial memorial in which the sacrifice of the cross is perpetuated and the sacred banquet of communion with the Lord's body and blood. The celebration of the Eucharistic sacrifice is wholly directed toward the intimate union of the faithful with Christ through communion (CCC 1382).
- Christ is present, whole entire, in each of the species [consecrated bread and wine] (CCC 1390).
- This presence is realized by a complete change of the substance of bread and wine into the body and blood of Christ, i.e. transubstantiation—hence the sacred species deserve honor and adoration (CCC 1376).
- Only a validly ordained priest can validly consecrate the bread and wine (Canon 900.1; CCC 1142).
- Holy Communion is receiving Christ in the Eucharist.

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IN the Eucharist, Christ is truly present and alive, working through his Spirit; yet, as Saint Thomas said so well, "what you neither see nor grasp, faith confirms for you, leaving nature far behind."—Pope John Paul II

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THE Blessed Sacrament is the perfect Sacrament of the Lord's Passion, since it contains Christ himself and his Passion.—St. Thomas Aquinas (1225-1274)

- The whole Christ is received under one species; however, Communion under both kinds shows forth better the sacramental sign (General Instructions Roman Missal 240).
- Holy Communion must be received worthily, which supposes the state of grace. Anyone conscious of grave sin must receive the sacrament of Penance before coming to communion (CCC 1385).
- On Sundays and other holy days of obligation the faithful are bound to participate in the Mass (Canon 1248.1; CCC 1389, 2180). "Observe the Sabbath, keep it holy" (Deut 5:12). Those who deliberately fail in this obligation commit a grave sin (CCC 2181).
- The faithful are obliged to receive Holy Communion at least once a year, if possible during the Easter season (Canon 920; CCC 1389). The Church recommends—prepared by sacramental Penance—that the faithful receive communion whenever they attend Mass (CCC 1388, 1389, 1418).
- The principal effect of receiving the Eucharist in Holy Communion is that it unites us with Christ Jesus (CCC 1391).
- In addition, as bodily nourishment restores lost strength, so the Eucharist strengthens our charity (which tends to weaken in daily life), and this living charity wipes away venial sins and lessens our inclinations to evil (CCC 1394).
- As we are united more closely with Christ Jesus by our reception of the Eucharist in Holy Communion, our incorporation to the Church is likewise renewed, strengthened, and deepened (CCC 1396).

Catechism of the Catholic Church: Second Edition (Washington, D.C.: United States Catholic Conference, Inc.—Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 1994, 1997).

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WHEN you look at the crucifix, you understand how much Jesus loved you. When you look at the Sacred Host you understand how much Jesus loves you now.—Mother Teresa (1910-1997)

## ON THE TREASURE WE POSSESS

GOD is more honored by a single Mass than he could be by all actions of angels and men together, however fervent and heroic they might be. Yet how few hear Mass with the intention of giving God this sublime honor! How few think with joy on the glory a Mass gives to God. How few rejoice to possess the means of honoring him as he deserves! How seldom do we thank Jesus Christ that, in doing away with all other sacrifices, he has left us a sacrifice that cannot fail to be pleasing to God, a thank-offering proportionate to the benefits we have received from him, a victim capable of effacing the sins of the world.

It may be that in praying, fasting, and giving alms I offend God by my bad intention or by the way I act, more than I glorify him. Perhaps my acts of penance merit punishment rather than cancel it, and my alms render me a still greater debtor to God; but when I hear Mass, when I offer the Holy Sacrifice as priest or as a member of the Church, I can with full courage and confidence defy heaven to do anything that pleases God more. Then I can ask for pardon and be sure of obtaining it no matter how great or numberless my sins. Whatever I hope for and desire I can pray for confidently. I can ask for great graces of every kind for myself, my friends, and my enemies, and far from being ashamed at asking for so much I shall know it is little in comparison with what I offer. My only fear is that I shall ask too little and not have a firm, unshakeable hope of obtaining not only what I ask but far more.

If we only knew the treasure we hold in our hands! Happy a thousand times those who know how to profit by the Mass! In this adorable Sacrifice they can find all things: graces, riches spiritual and temporal, favors for body and mind for life and eternity.

Yet how often we must confess that we do not even think of using the treasure we possess, we do not even try to grasp it. What value do we set upon holy Mass? With what intentions do we assist at it? How do we hear it? Some come from custom and human respect, and sometimes even from less worthy motives. At Mass they are occupied with useless thoughts; they amuse themselves with looking at the decorations of the church or at the people; they talk and even yawn, not

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RECEIVE him, in whom, by whom, for whom, you believe, hope and love.—St. Francis de Sales (1567-1622)

knowing how to occupy themselves.

Have you never received any favors from God, and have you thanked him for them? Take care lest through lack of gratitude you prevent God from showering his blessings upon you. It is a strange thing that we who are surrounded and loaded with God's blessings, we whom God has loved, preserved, and cherished from the first moment of our life until now, have never even thanked him as we ought.

This we can do in holy Mass!

Translated/arranged by Mother M. Philip, I.B.V.M., *The Spiritual Direction of Saint Claude de la Colombière* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1934), pp. 3-5. Reprinted with permission of Ignatius Press ([www.ignatius.com](http://www.ignatius.com)), 800-651-1531.

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WHEN the Sisters are exhausted, up to their eyes in work; when all seems to go awry, they spend an hour in prayer before the Blessed Sacrament. This practice has never failed to bear fruit: they experience peace and strength.—Mother Teresa (1910-1997)

## ON FREQUENT COMMUNION

ALL spiritual writers agree that the best sign you can have of solid devotion is the amendment of life and perseverance in good. You think there is illusion in such frequent Communion and that it would be better to go more rarely. Do not come to me with such arguments. I began to amend my life by frequenting Holy Communion after having tried every other way and failed. When I went rarely to Holy Communion I had no end of bad habits and imperfections which appeared to me insurmountable. I uprooted these by multiplying my Communions, and you want me to believe that it was the devil who urged me to do this! Every time I omitted to frequent Communion I felt my weakness more. I know some souls who have relapsed into sin the very day they omitted Communion. When I communicated again I felt fervor rekindle in my heart. I know by my own experience and by that of hundreds of people that by following your advice they would soon give up all reception of the Sacraments.

No fervent soul has ever relaxed who did not first leave off receiving the Holy Eucharist. If I found that when going frequently to Communion I became no better, was still just as weak, just as prone to evil, just as indifferent about sin, I should conclude, not that I ought to leave off going, but that I ought to receive Our Lord with better dispositions. I should see if my confessions were wanting in sincerity, contrition, or purpose of amendment.

If you are sinful, repent so that you can communicate often. If you are imperfect, go often to Communion that you may amend your faults.

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THE Eucharist is necessary to preserve the soul in the spiritual life of grace; for the soul, like the body, comes gradually exhausted, if care is no taken to repair its strength.—St. John Baptist de la Salle (1651-1719)

## THE SACRED LITURGY in the absence of a Catholic Priest

Diligence in prayer is the perfection of the gospel.

If because of lack of a sacred minister or for other grave cause participation in the celebration of the Eucharist is impossible, it is specially recommended that the faithful take part in the Liturgy of the Word or engage in prayer for an appropriate amount of time (Canon 1248.2; CCC 2183).

THE Church believes as she prays—lex orandi, lex credendi (the law or prayer is the law of belief). When we join with the Church in prayer, we too profess the faith of the Church. For this reason, a sense of the "Sunday obligation" (Canon 1247; CCC 1389, 2180-83) obliges those who are unable to attend Mass, to still join [unite] with the Church in prayer. And in this, the common prayer of the Church should take preference to private devotions.

The purpose of this Order of Service (Liturgy of the Word), together with the assigned readings, is to assist the faithful to join with the Church each week in prayer. The Order of Service follows the outline of the Mass—the Eucharistic Liturgy is not included. It concludes with a prayer of Spiritual Communion.

### ORDER OF SERVICE

#### ENTRANCE ANTIPHON

All say:

Lord, you are just, and the judgments you make are right.  
Show mercy when you judge me,  
your servant.

After the entrance song, all make the sign of the cross.

† [Leader]: In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.

R. [People answer]: Amen.

The leader gives one of these greetings:

- A. † May the Lord be with us.  
—or—  
B. † May the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ and the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with us all.

#### PENITENTIAL RITE

† Let us call to mind our sins and ask for God's forgiveness.

All say their confession together:

I confess to almighty God, and to you, my brothers and sisters, that I have sinned through my own fault [they strike their breast]: in my thoughts and in my words, in what I have done, and in what I have failed to do; and I ask blessed Mary, ever virgin, all the angels and saints, and you, my brothers and sisters, to pray for me to the Lord our God.

The leader adds:

† May almighty God have mercy on us, forgive us our sins, and bring us to everlasting life.

R. Amen.

#### KYRIE

† Lord, have mercy.

R. Lord, have mercy.

† Christ, have mercy.

R. Christ, have mercy.

† Lord, have mercy.

R. Lord, have mercy.

#### GLORIA

All say:

Glory to God in the highest, and peace to his people on earth.  
Lord God, heavenly King,  
almighty God and Father, we worship you, we give you thanks, we praise you for your glory.  
Lord Jesus Christ, only Son of the Father, Lord God, Lamb of God, you take away the sin of the

world: have mercy on us; you are seated at the right hand of the Father: receive our prayer. For you alone are the Holy One, you alone are the Lord, you alone are the Most High, Jesus Christ, with the Holy Spirit, in the glory of God the Father. Amen.

#### OPENING PRAYER

† Let us pray. Almighty and ever-living God, our source of power and inspiration, give us strength and joy in serving you as followers of Jesus Christ, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever.

R. Amen.

#### LITURGY OF THE WORD

Readings are found in the Sunday Missal.  
Or, see Liturgical Calendar and the corresponding Lectionary Readings.

#### GENERAL INTERCESSIONS

Prayers are offered for the needs of the faithful.

#### PROFESSION OF FAITH

All say:

We believe in one God, the Father, the Almighty, maker of heaven and earth, of all that is seen and unseen. We believe in one Lord, Jesus Christ, the only Son of God, eternally begotten of the Father, God from God, Light from Light, true God from true

God, begotten, not made, one in Being with the Father. Through him all things were made. For us men and for our salvation he came down from heaven:

All bow during these three lines:

by the power of the Holy Spirit he was born of the Virgin Mary, and became man.

For our sake he was crucified under Pontius Pilate; he suffered, died, and was buried. On the third day he rose again in fulfillment of the Scriptures; he ascended into heaven and is seated at the right hand of the Father. He will come again in glory to judge the living and the dead, and his kingdom will have no end. We believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord, the giver of life, who proceeds from the Father and the Son. With the Father and the Son he is worshiped and glorified. He has spoken through the Prophets. We believe in one holy catholic and apostolic Church. We acknowledge one baptism for the forgiveness of sins. We look for the resurrection of the dead, and the life of the world to come. Amen.

#### LORD'S PRAYER

The leader says one of the following:

- A. Let us pray with confidence to the Father in the words our

Savior gave us.

—or—

- B. Let us ask our Father to forgive our sins and to bring us to forgive those who sin against us.

All continue:

Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name; thy kingdom come; thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread; and forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us; and lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.

#### DOXOLOGY

- † Deliver us, Lord, from every evil, and grant us peace in our day. In your mercy keep us free from sin and protect us from all anxiety as we wait in joyful hope for the coming of our Savior, Jesus Christ.
- R. For the kingdom, the power, and the glory are yours, now and for ever.

#### SIGN OF PEACE

- † Lord Jesus Christ, you said to your apostles: I leave you peace, my peace I give you. Look not on our sins, but on the faith of your Church, and grant us the peace and unity of our kingdom where you

live and reign for ever and ever.

- R. Amen.

† Let us offer each other the sign of peace.

All make an appropriate sign of peace, according to local custom.

#### CLOSING ANTIPHON

All say:

The Lord is good to those who hope in him, to those who are searching for his love.

#### CLOSING PRAYER

A prayer of Spiritual Communion may be said in anticipation of the next opportunity to attend Mass and receive Holy Communion:

- A. † Let us pray. O Lord, may we soon receive the body and blood of your Son, Jesus Christ, with the spirit and fervor of the saints. May it be for us the remission of our sins. And, as befits your servants, may it incite us to works pleasing to you; so that our every thought, word, and deed may give you glory.
- or—
- B. † O Jesus, [we turn toward the holy tabernacle where You live hidden for love of us.] We love you, O God. We cannot receive you in Holy Communion.

Come nevertheless and visit us with Your grace. Come spiritually into our hearts. Purify them. Sanctify them. Render them like unto your own.

—or—

- C. † O Lord, since we are not permitted the joy of Thy sacramental presence this day, let Thy goodness and omnipotence decree the cleansing of our souls from the stain of sin, that healed of our wounds, we may deserve to receive Thee in spirit. Every day and every hour, fortified anew by Thy grace, may we courageously resist our enemies, particularly that failing against which for the love of Thee, we wage unceasing war.

- R. Amen.

All make the sign of the cross.

- † May Almighty God bless us, protect us from all evil, and bring us to everlasting life.
- R. Amen.

#### DISMISSAL

- † Let us go in peace to love and serve the Lord.



# LITURGICAL CALENDAR 2004-2013

	P	S	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008
Sun Cycle	Wk	C	A	B	C	A	
Wkdy Cycle		2	1	2	1	2	
<hr/>							
1-Adv	1	30Nov03	28Nov04	27Nov05	3Dec06	2Dec07	
2-Adv	2	7Dec	5Dec	4Dec	10Dec	9Dec	
3-Adv	3	14Dec	12Dec	11Dec	17Dec	16Dec	
4-Adv	4	21Dec	19Dec	18Dec	24Dec	23Dec	
Christ	Proper	25Dec	25Dec	25Dec	25Dec	25Dec	
H Fam	1	28Dec	26Dec	30Dec	31Dec	30Dec	
M,MofG	Proper	1Jan04	1Jan05	1Jan06	1Jan07	1Jan08	
Epi	2	4Jan	2Jan	8Jan	7Jan	6Jan	
Baptism	1	11Jan	9Jan	-	-	13Jan	
2-OT	2	18Jan	16Jan	15Jan	14Jan	20Jan	
3-OT	3	25Jan	23Jan	22Jan	21Jan	27Jan	
4-OT	4	1Feb	30Jan	29Jan	28Jan	3Feb	
5-OT	1	8Feb	6Feb	5Feb	4Feb	-	
6-OT	2	15Feb	-	12Feb	11Feb	-	
7-OT	3	22Feb	-	19Feb	18Feb	-	
8-OT	4	-	-	26Feb	-	-	
9-OT	1	-	-	-	-	-	
AshWed	4	25Fe	9Feb	1Mar	21Feb	6Feb	
1-L	1	29Feb	13Feb	5Mar	25Feb	10Feb	
2-L	2	7Mar	20Feb	17Mar	4Mar	17Feb	
3-L	3	14Mar	27Feb	19Mar	11Mar	24Feb	
4-L	4	21Mar	6Mar	26Mar	18Mar	2Mar	
5-L	1	28Mar	13Mar	2Apr	25Mar	9Mar	
Passion	2	4Apr	20Mar	9Apr	1Apr	16Mar	
Easter	Proper	11Apr	27Mar	16Apr	8Apr	23Mar	
2-E	2	18Apr	3Apr	23Apr	15Apr	30Mar	
3-E	3	25Apr	10Apr	30Apr	22Apr	6Apr	
4-E	4	2May	17Apr	7May	29Apr	13Apr	
5-E	1	9May	24Apr	14May	6May	20Apr	
6-E	2	16May	1May	21May	13May	27Apr	
Ascen	Proper	20May	5May	25May	17May	1May	
7-E	3	23May	8May	28May	20May	4May	
Pente	Proper	30May	15May	4Jun	27May	11May	
Trin	Proper	6Jun	22May	11Jun	3Jun	18May	
CorChr	Proper	13Jun	29May	18Jun	10Jun	25May	
6-OT	2	-	-	-	-	-	
7-OT	3	-	-	-	-	-	
8-OT	4	-	-	-	-	-	
9-OT	1	-	-	-	-	1Jun	
10-OT	2	-	5Jun	-	-	8Jun	
11-OT	3	-	12Jun	-	17Jun	15Jun	
12-OT	4	20Jun	19Jun	25Jun	17Jun	22Jun	
13-OT	1	27Jun	26Jun	2Jul	1Jul	SsPPP	
14-OT	2	4Jul	3Jul	9Jul	8Jul	6Jul	
15-OT	3	11Jul	10Jul	16Jul	15Jul	13Jul	
16-OT	4	18Jul	17Jul	23Jul	22Jul	20Jul	
17-OT	1	25Jul	24Jul	30Jul	29Jul	27Jul	
18-OT	2	1Aug	31Jul	Trans	5Aug	3Aug	
19-OT	3	8Aug	7Aug	13Aug	12Aug	10Aug	

20-OT	4	Assum	14Aug	20Aug	19Aug	17Aug
21-OT	1	22Aug	21Aug	27Aug	26Aug	24Aug
22-OT	2	29Aug	28Aug	3Sep	2Sep	31Aug
23-OT	3	5Sep	4Sep	10Sep	9Sep	7Sep
24-OT	4	12Sep	11Sep	17Sep	16Sep	HCross
25-OT	1	19Sep	18Sep	24Sep	23Sep	21Sep
26-OT	2	26Sep	25Sep	1Oct	30Sep	28Sep
27-OT	3	3Oct	2Oct	8Oct	7Oct	5Oct
28-OT	4	10Oct	9Oct	15Oct	14Oct	12Oct
29-OT	1	17Oct	16Oct	22Oct	21Oct	19Oct
30-OT	2	24Oct	23Oct	29Oct	28Oct	26Oct
All Sts	Proper	1Nov	1Nov	1Nov	1Nov	1Nov
31-OT	3	31Oct	30Oct	5Nov	4Nov	All Souls
32-OT	4	7Nov	6Nov	12Nov	11Nov	9Nov
33-OT	1	14Nov	13Nov	19Nov	18Nov	16Nov
34-OT	2	21Nov	20Nov	26Nov	25Nov	23Nov

	P	S	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013
Sun Cycle	Wk	C	B	C	A	B	C
Wkdy Cycle		1	2	1	2	1	
<hr/>							
1-Adv	1	30Nov08	29Nov09	28Nov10	27Nov11	2Dec12	
2-Adv	2	7Dec	6Dec	5Dec	4Dec	9Dec	
3-Adv	3	14Dec	13Dec	12Dec	11Dec	16Dec	
4-Adv	4	21Dec	20Dec	19Dec	18Dec	23Dec	
Christ	Proper	25Dec	25Dec	25Dec	25Dec	25Dec	
H Fam	1	28Dec	27Dec	26Dec	30Dec	30Dec	
M,MofG	Proper	1Jan09	1Jan10	1Jan11	1Jan12	1Jan13	
Epi	2	4Jan	3Jan	2Jan	8Jan	6Jan	
Baptism	1	11Jan	10Jan	9Jan	9Jan	13Jan	
2-OT	2	18Jan	17Jan	16Jan	15Jan	20Jan	
3-OT	3	25Jan	24Jan	23Jan	22Jan	27Jan	
4-OT	4	1Feb	31Jan	30Jan	29Jan	3Feb	
5-OT	1	8Feb	7Feb	6Feb	5Feb	10Feb	
6-OT	2	15Feb	14Feb	13Feb	12Feb	-	
7-OT	3	22Feb	-	20Feb	19Feb	-	
8-OT	4	-	-	27Feb	-	-	
9-OT	1	-	-	6Mar	-	-	
Ash Wed	4	25Feb	17Feb	9Mar	22Feb	13Feb	
1-L	1	1Mar	21Feb	13Mar	26Feb	17Feb	
2-L	2	8Mar	28Feb	20Mar	4Mar	24Feb	
3-L	3	15Mar	7Mar	27Mar	11Mar	3Mar	
4-L	4	22Mar	14Mar	3Apr	18Mar	10Mar	
5-L	1	29Mar	21Mar	10Apr	25Mar	17Mar	
Passion	2	5Apr	28Mar	17Apr	1Apr	24Mar	
Easter	Proper	12Apr	4Apr	24Apr	8Apr	31Mar	
2-E	2	19Apr	11Apr	1May	15Apr	7Apr	
3-E	3	26Apr	18Apr	8May	22Apr	14Apr	
4-E	4	3May	25Apr	15May	29Apr	21Apr	
5-E	1	10May	2May	22May	6May	28Apr	
6-E	2	17May	9May	29May	13May	5May	
Ascen	Proper	21May	13May	2Jun	17May	9May	
7-E	3	24May	16May	5Jun	20May	12May	
Pente	Proper	31May	23May	12Jun	27May	19May	
Trin	Proper	7Jun	30May	19Jun	3Jun	26May	

CorChr	Proper	14Jun	6Jun	26Jun	10Jun	2Jun
6-OT	2	-	-	-	-	-
7-OT	3	-	-	-	-	-
8-OT	4	-	-	-	-	-
9-OT	1	-	-	-	-	-
10-OT	2	-	-	-	-	9Jun
11-OT	3	-	13Jun	-	17Jun	16Jun
12-OT	4	21Jun	20Jun	-	24Jun	23Jun
13-OT	1	28Jun	27Jun	-	1Jul	30Jun
14-OT	2	5Jul	4Jul	3Jul	8Jul	7Jul
15-OT	3	12Jul	11Jul	10Jul	15Jul	14Jul
16-OT	4	19Jul	18Jul	17Jul	22Jul	21Jul
17-OT	1	26Jul	25Jul	24Jul	29Jul	28Jul
18-OT	2	2Aug	1Aug	31Jul	5Aug	4Aug
19-OT	3	9Aug	8Aug	7Aug	12Aug	11Aug
20-OT	4	16Aug	Assum	14Aug	19Aug	18Aug
21-OT	1	23Aug	22Aug	21Aug	26Aug	25Aug
22-OT	2	30Aug	29Aug	28Aug	2Sep	1Sep
23-OT	3	6Sep	5Sep	4Sep	9Sep	8Sep
24-OT	4	13Sep	12Sep	11Sep	16Sep	15Sep
25-OT	1	20Sep	19Sep	18Sep	23Sep	22Sep
26-OT	2	27Sep	26Sep	25Sep	30Sep	29Sep
27-OT	3	4Oct	3Oct	2Oct	7Oct	6Oct
28-OT	4	11Oct	10Oct	9Oct	14Oct	13Oct
29-OT	1	18Oct	17Oct	16Oct	21Oct	20Oct
30-OT	2	25Oct	24Oct	23Oct	28Oct	27Oct
All Sts	Proper	1Nov	1Nov	1Nov	1Nov	1Nov
31-OT	3	-	31Oct	30Oct	4Nov	3Nov
32-OT	4	8Nov	7Nov	6Nov	11Nov	10Nov
33-OT	1	15Nov	14Nov	13Nov	18Nov	17Nov
34-OT	2	22Nov	21Nov	20Nov	25Nov	24Nov

Adv	Advent
All Sts	All Saints (1 Nov)
All Souls	All Souls (2 Nov)
Anun	Annunciation (25 Mar)
Ascen	Ascension (40 days after Easter)
AshWed	Ash Wednesday
Assum	Assumption of Mary (15 Aug)
Baptism	Baptism of the Lord
BjnBpt	Birth of John the Baptist (24 Jun)
Christ	Christmas (25 Dec)
CorChr	Corpus Christi (2nd Sunday after Pentecost)
DedLB	Dedication of St. John Lateran Basilica (9 Nov)
E	Easter Season
Epi	Epiphany
HCross	Exaltation of the Holy Cross (14 Sep)
HFam	Holy Family
L	Lenten Season
M,MofG	Mary, Mother of God (1 Jan)
OT	Ordinary Time
Passion	Passion/Palm Sunday
Pente	Pentecost
Pres	Presentation of the Lord (2 Feb)
SacHrt	Sacred Heart (Friday after Corpus Christi)
SsPP	SS. Peter and Paul (29 Jun)
Trans	Transfiguration (6 Aug)
Trin	Trinity Sunday (1st Sunday after Pentecost)

## LECTIONARY READINGS

ADVENT	Cycle A	Cycle B	Cycle C
1st Sunday	Is 2:1-5 Ps 122 Rom 13:11-14 Mt 24:37-44	Is 63:16b-17:1:3-8; 64:3b-7 Ps 80 1 Cor 1:3-9 1 Mk 13:31-37	Jr 33:14-16 Ps 25 1 Thes 3:12-4:2 Lk 21:25-28,34-36
2nd Sunday	Is 11:1-10 Ps 72 Rom 15:4-9 Mt 3:1-12	Is 40:1-5, 9-11 Ps 85 2 Pt 3:8-15 Mk 1:1-8	Bar 5:1-9 Ps 126 Phil 1:3-6,8-11 Lk 3:1-6
3rd Sunday	Is 35:1-6a,10 Ps 146 Jas 5:7-10 Mt:11:2-11	Is 61:1-2a,10-11 Ps Lk 1 1 Thes 5:16-24 Jn 1:6-8,19-28	Zep 3:14-18a Ps Is 12 Phil 4:4-7 Lk 3:10-18
4th Sunday	Is 7:10-14 Ps 24 Rom 1:1-7 Mt 1:18-24	2 Sm 7:1-5, 8b-12, 14a,16 Ps 89 Rom 16:25-27 Lk 1:26-38	Mi 5:2-5a Ps 80 Heb 10:5-10 Lk 1:39-45
CHRISTMAS	A (or ABC)	B	C
Vigil	Is 62:1-5 Ps 89 Acts 13:16-17,22-25 Mt 1:1-25	—	—
Night	Is 9:2-4,6-7 Ps 96 Ti 2:11-14 Lk 2:1-16	—	—
Dawn	Is 62:11-12 Ps 97 Ti 3:4-7 Lk 2:15-20	—	—
Day	Is 52:7-10 Ps 98 Heb 1:1-6 Jn 1:1-18	—	—
Holy Family	Sir 3:2-6,12-14 Ps 128 Col 3:12-21 (Cycle A) Mt 2:13-15,19-23 (B) Lk 2:22-40 or Lk 2:22,39-40 (C) Lk 2:41-52	YEAR B OPTIONAL READINGS: Gn 15:1-6;17:15a-16; 21:1-7 Ps 105 Heb 11:8,11-12,17-19 Lk 2:22-40	YEAR C OPTIONAL READINGS: Is 1:11,20-22,24-28 Ps 84 1 Jn 3:1-2,21-24 Lk 2:41-52
2nd Sunday after Christmas	Sir 24:1-4,8-12 Ps 147 Eph 1:3-6,15-19 Jn 1:1-18	—	—

Epiphany	Is 60:1-6 Ps 72 Eph 3:2-3a,5-6 Mt 2:1-12	—	—
Baptism of the Lord	Is 42:1-4,6-7 Ps 29 Acts 10:34-38 Mt 3:13-17	Is 55:1-11 Ps Is 12 1 Jn 5:1-9 Mk 1:7-11	Is 40:1-5,9-11 Ps 104 Ti 2:11-14;3:4-7 Lk 3:15-16,21-22
LENT	A (or ABC)	B	C
Ash Wednesday	Jl 2:12-18 Ps 51 2 Cor 5:20-6:2 Mt 6:1-6,16-18	Jl 2:12-18 Ps 51 2 Cor 5:20-6:2 Mt 6:1-6,16-18	Jl 2:12-18 Ps 51 2 Cor 5:20-6:2 Mt 6:1-6,16-18
1st Sunday	Gn 2:7-9,16-18,25; 3:1-7 Ps 51 Rom 5:12-19 Mt 4:1-11	Gn 9:8-15 Ps 25 1 Pt 3:18-22 Mk 1:12-15	Deut 26:4-10 Ps 91 Rom 10:8-13 Lk 4:1-13
2nd Sunday	Gn 12:1-4 Ps 33 2 Tm 1:8b-10 Mt 17:1-9	Gn 22:1-2,9-13,15-18 Ps 116 Rom 8:31b-35,37 Mk 9:2-10	Gn 15:5-12,17-18 Ps 27 Phil 3:17-4:1 Lk 9:28b-36
3rd Sunday	Ex 17:3-7 Ps 95 Rom 5:1-2,5-8 Jn 4:5-42	Ex 20:1-17 Ps 19 1 Cor 1:18,22-25 Jn 2:13-25 <i>or the readings for Year A</i>	Ex 3:1-8a,13-15 Ps 103 1 Cor 10:1-6,10-12 Lk 13:1-9 <i>or the readings for Year A</i>
4th Sunday	1 Sm 16:1b,6-7,10-13a Ps 23 Eph 5:8-14 Jn 9:1-41	Chr 36:14-16,17a,19-23 Ps 137 Eph 2:4-10 Jn 3:14-21 <i>or the readings for Year A</i>	Jos 5:9a,10-12 Ps 34 2 Cor 5:17-21 Lk 15:1-3,11-32 <i>or the readings for Year A</i>
5th Sunday	Ez 37:12-14 Ps 130 Rom 8:8-11 Jn 11:1-45	Jer 31:31-34 Ps 51 Heb 5:7-9 Jn 12:20-33 <i>or the readings for Year A</i>	Is 43:16-21 Ps 126 Phil 3:8-14 Jn 8:1-11 <i>or the readings for Year A</i>
Passion (Palm) Sunday	PROCESSION:  Mt 21:1-11  EUCCHARIST:  Is 50:4-7 Ps 22 Phil 2:6-11 Mt 26:14-27,66	PROCESSION:  Mk 11:1-10 <i>or</i> Jn 12:12-16  EUCCHARIST:  Is 50:4-7 Ps 22 Phil 2:6-11 Mk 14:1-15:47	PROCESSION:  Lk 19:28-40  EUCCHARIST:  Is 50:4-7 Ps 22 Phil 2:6-11 Lk 22:14-23,56

EASTER TRIDUUM and EASTER SEASON	A (or ABC)	B	C
Holy Thursday Chrism Mass	Is 61:1-3a,6a,8b-9 Ps 89 Rv 1:4-8 Lk 4:16-21	—	—
Good Friday	Is 52:13-53:12 Ps 31 Heb 4:14-16;5:7-9 Jn 18:1-19:42	—	—
Holy Saturday (Easter Vigil)	VIGIL READINGS, PSALMS: (1) Gn 1:1-2:2 <i>or</i> Gn 1:1,26-31a Ps 104 <i>or</i> Ps 33 (2) Gn 22:1-18 <i>or</i> Gn 22:1-2,9a,10-13,15-18 Ps 16 (3) Ex 14:15-15:1 Ps 15 (4) Is 54:5-14 Ps 30 (5) Is 55:1-11 Is 12:2-3, 4, 5-6 (6) Bar 3:9-15,32-4:4 Ps 19 (7) Ez 36:16-17a,18-28 Ps 42 (if Baptism is celebrated) <i>or</i> Is 12:2-3,4bcd,5-6 <i>or</i> Ps 51 (if no Baptism) MASS: Rom 6:3-11 Ps 188 <b>(Cycle A)</b> Mt 28:1-10 <b>(Cycle B)</b> Mk 16:1-7 <b>(Cycle C)</b> Lk 24:1-12		
Easter Sunday	Acts 10:34a,37-43 Ps 118 Col 3:1-4 <i>or</i> 1 Cor 5:6b-8 Sequence: «Victimae paschali laudes» Jn 20:1-9 <i>or</i> Gospel from Vigil <i>or</i> Lk 24:13-35	—	—

2nd Sunday	Acts 2:42-47 Ps 118 1 Pt 1:3-9 Jn 20:19-31	Acts 4:32-35 Ps 118 1 Jn 5:1-6 Jn 20:19-31	Acts 5:12-16 Ps 118 Rv 1:9-11a,12-13, 17-19 Jn 20:19-31	3rd Sunday	Is 9:1-4 Ps 27 1 Cor 1:10-13,17-18 Mt 4:12-23	Jn 3:1-5,10 Ps 25 1 Cor 7:29-31 Mk 1:14-20	Neh 8:1-4a,5-6,8-10 Ps 19 1 Cor 12:12-30 Lk 1:1-4;4:14-21
3rd Sunday	Acts 2:14,22b-28 Ps 16 1 Pt 1:17-21 Lk 24:13-35	Ac 3:13b-15,17-19 Ps 4 1 Jn 2:1-5a Lk 24:35-48	Ac 5:27b-32,40b-41 Ps 30 Rv 5:11-14 Jn 21:1-19	4th Sunday	Zep 2:3;3:12-13 Ps 146 1 Cor 1:26-31 Mt 5:1-12a	Dt 18:15-20 Ps 95 1 Cor 7:17,32-35 Jn 1:21-28	Jer 1:4-5,17-19 Ps 71 1 Cor 12:31-13:13 Lk 4:21-30
4th Sunday	Acts 2:14a,36b-41 Ps 23 1 Pt 2:20b-25 Jn 10:1-10	Acts 4:7-12 Ps 118 1 Jn 3:1-2 Jn 10:11-18	Acts 13:14,43-52 Ps 100 Rv 7:9,14b-17 Jn 10:27-30	5th Sunday	Is 58:6-10 Ps 112 1 Cor 2:1-5 Mt 5:13-16	Jb 7:1-4,6-7 Ps 147 1 Cor 9:16-19,22-23 Mk 1:29-39	Is 6:1-2a,3-8 Ps 138 1 Cor 15:1-11 Lk 5:1-11
5th Sunday	Acts 6:1-7 Ps 33 1 Pt 2:4-9 Jn 14:1-12	Acts 9:26-31 Ps 22 1 Jn 3:18-24 Jn 15:1-8	Acts 14:21b-27 Ps 145 Rv 21:1-5a Jn 13:1,31-33a,34-35	6th Sunday	Sir 15:15-20 Ps 119 1 Co 2:6-10 Mt 5:17-37	Lv 13:1-2,45-46 Ps 32 1 Co 10:23-11:1 Mk 1:40-45	Jer 17:5-8 Ps 1 1 Co 5:12,16-20 Lk 6:17,20-26
6th Sunday	Acts 8:5-8,14-17 Ps 66 1 Pt 3:15-18 Jn 14:15-21	Acts 10:25-26,34-35, 44-48 Ps 98 1 Jn 4:7-10 Jn 15:9-17	Acts 15:1-2,22-29 Ps 67 Rv 21:10-14,22-23 Jn 14:23-29	7th Sunday	Lv 19:1-2,17-18 Ps 103 1 Cor 3:16-23 Mt 5:38-48	Is 43:18-19,20-22, 22-25 Ps 41 2 Cor 1:18-22 Mk 2:1-12	1 Sm 26:2,7-9,12-13, 22-25 Ps 103 1 Cor 15:45-50 Lk 6:27-38
Ascension	Acts 1:1-11 Ps 47 Eph 1:17-23 Mt 28:16-20	Acts 1:1-11 Ps 47 Eph 4:1-13 Mk 16:15-20	Acts 1:1-11 Ps 47 Heb 9:24-28;10:19-23 Lk 24:46-53	8th Sunday	Is 49:13-15 Ps 62 1 Cor 4:1-5 Mt 6:24-34	Hos 2:14-15,21-22 Ps 103 2 Cor 3:1b-6 Mk 2:18-22	Sir 27:4-7 Ps 92 1 Cor 15:54-58 Lk 6:39-45
7th Sunday	Acts 1:12-14 Ps 27 1 Pt 4:13-16 Jn 17:1-11a	Acts 1:15-17,20ac, 20c-26 Ps 103 1 Jn 4:11-16 Jn 17:11b-19	Acts 7:55-60 Ps 97 Rv 22:12-14,16-17,20 Jn 17:20-26	9th Sunday	Dt 10:12-13a;11,18, 26-28,32 Ps 31 Rom 1:16-17;3:20-26, 28 Mt 7:21-27	Dt 5:12-15 Ps 81 2 Cor 4:6-11 Mk 2:23-3:6	1 Kgs 8:41-43 Ps 117 Gal 1:1-2,6-10 Lk 7:1-10
Vigil of Pentecost	Gn 11:1-9 or Ex 19:3-8a, 16-20b or Ez 37:1-14 or Jl 3:1-5 Ps 104 Rom 8:22-27 Jn 7:37-39	—	—	10th Sunday	Hos 6:3-6 Ps 50 Rom 4:18-25 Mt 9:9-13	Gn 3:9-15 Ps 130 2 Cor 4:13- 5:1 Mk 3:20-35	1 Kgs 17:8-9,17-21a, 22-24 Ps 30 Gal 1:11-19 Lk 7:11-17
Pentecost Sunday	Acts 2:1-11 Ps 104 1 Cor 12:3b-7,12-13 Sequence: «Veni, Sancte Spiritus» Jn 20:19-23	Acts 2:1-11 Ps 104 1 Cor 12:3b-7,12-13 or Gal 5:16-25 Sequence: «Veni, Sancte Spiritus» Jn 20:19-23 or Jn 15:26-27;16: 12-15	Acts 2:1-11 Ps 104 1Cor 12:3b-7,12-13 or Rom 8:8-17 Sequence: «Veni, Sancte Spiritus» Jn 8:8-17 or Jn 14:15-16, 23b-26	11th Sunday	Ex 19:1-6a Ps 100 Rom 5:6-11 Mt 9:36-10:8	Ez 17:22-24 Ps 92 2 Cor 5:6-10 Mk 4:26-34	2 S 12:7-10,13 Ps 32 Gal 2:16,19-21 Lk 7:36-8:3
				12th Sunday	Jer 20:7,10-13 Ps 69 Rom 5:12-15 Mt 10:26-33	Jb 38:1-4,8-11 Ps 107 2 Cor 5:14-17 Mk 4:35-41	Zec 12:10-11 Ps 63 Gal 3:26-29 Lk 9:18-24
				13th Sunday	2 Kgs 4:8-12a,14-17 Ps 89 Rom 6:3-4,8-11 Mt 10:37-42	Ws 1:13-15;2:23-24 Ps 30 2 Cor 8:7,9,13-15 Lk 9:51-62	1 Kgs 19:16b,19-21 Ps 16 Gal 5:1,13-18 Lk 10:1-12,17-20
				14th Sunday	Zec 9:9-10 Ps 145 Rom 8:9,11-13 Mt 11:25-30	Ez 2:2-5 Ps 123 2 Cor 12:7-10 Mk 6:1-6	Is 66:10-14c Ps 66 Gal 6:14-18 Lk 10:1-12,17-20
ORDINARY TIME	A (or ABC)	B	C				
2nd Sunday	Is 49:3,5-6 Ps 40 1 Cor 1:1-3 Jn 1:29-34	1 Sm 3:3b-10,19 Ps 40 1 Cor 6:13c-15a,17-20 Jn 1:35-42	Is 62:1-5 Ps 96 1 Cor 12:4-11 Jn 2:1-12				

15th Sunday	Is 55:10-11 Ps 65 Rom 8:18-23 Mt 13:1-23	Am 7:12-15 Ps 85 Eph 1:3-14 Mk 6:7-13	Dt 30:10-14 Ps 69 <b>or</b> Ps 19 Col 1:15-20 Lk 19:25-37	27th Sunday	Is 5:1-7 Ps 80 Phil 4:6-9 Mt 21:33-43	Gn 2:7-8,18-24 Ps 128 Heb 2:9-11 Mk 10:2-16	Hab 1:2-3; 2:2-4 Ps 95 2 Tm 1:6-8,13-14 Lk 17:5-10
16th Sunday	Wis 12:13,16-19 Ps 86 Rom 8:26-27 Mt 13:24-43	Jer 23:1-6 Ps 23 Eph 2:13-18 Mk 6:30-34	Gn 18:1-10a Ps 15 Col 1:24-28 Lk 19:38-42	28th Sunday	Is 25:6-10a Ps 23 Phil 4:10-14,19-20 Mt 22:1-14	Wis 7:7-11 Ps 90 Heb 4:12-13 Mk 10:17-30	2 Kgs 5:14-17 Ps 98 2 Tm 2:8-13 Lk 17:11-19
17th Sunday	1 Kgs 3:5-12 Ps 119 Rom 8:28-30 Mt 13:44-52	2 Kgs 4:42-44 Ps 145 Eph 4:1-6 Jn 6:1-15	Gn 18:20-21,23-32 Ps 138 Col 2:6-14 Lk 11:1-13	29th Sunday	Is 45:1,4-6 Ps 96 1 Thes 1:1-5b Mt 22:15-21	Is 53:4,10-11 Ps 33 Heb 4:14-16 Mk 10:35-45	Ex 17:8-13 Ps 121 2 Tm 3:14-4:2 Lk 18:1-8
18th Sunday	Is 55:1-3 Ps 145 Rom 8:35,37-39 Mt 14:13-21	Ex 16:2-4,12-15,31 Ps 78 Eph 4:17,20-24 Jn 6:24-35	Qo 1:2,2:21-23 Ps 90 Col 3:1-5,9-11 Lk 12:13-21	30th Sunday	Ex 22:21-27 Ps 18 1 Thes 1:5c-10 Mt 22:34-40	Jer 31:7-9 Ps 126 Heb 5:1-6 Mk 10:46b-52	Sir 35:15-17,20-22 Ps 34 2 Tm 4:6-8,16-18 Lk 18:9-14
19th Sunday	1 Kgs 19:9a,11-13a Ps 85 Rom 9:1-5 Mt 14:22-33	1 Kgs 19:4-8 Ps 34 Eph 4:30-5:2 Jn 6:41-51	Wis 18:6-9 Ps 33 Heb 11:1-2,8-19 Lk 12:32-48	31st Sunday	Mal 1:14b-2:2b,8-10 Ps 131 1 Thes 2:7b-9,13 Mt 23:1-12	Dt 6:2-6 Ps 145 Heb 7:23-28 Mk 12:28b-34	Wis 11:22-12:2 Ps 145 2 Thes 1:11-2:2 Lk 19:1-10
20th Sunday	Is 56:1,6-7 Ps 67 Rom 11:13-15,29-32 Mt 15:21-28	Prv 9:1-6 Ps 34 Eph 5:15-20 Jn 6:51-58	Jer 38:1-2,4-6,8-10 Ps 40 Heb 12:1-4 1 Lk 2:49-53	32nd Sunday	Wis 6:12-16 Ps 63 1 Thes 4:13-18 Mt 25:1-13	1 Kgs 17:10-16 Ps 146 Heb 9:24-28 Mk 12:38-44	2 Mc 7:1-2,9-14 Ps 17 2 Thes 2:16-3:5 Lk 20:27-38
21st Sunday	Is 22:15,19-23 Ps 138 Rom 11:33-36 Mt 16:13-20	Jos 24:1-2a,15-17,18b Ps 34 Eph 4:32-52; 5:21-32 Jn 6:60-69	Is 66:18-21 Ps 117 Heb 12:5-7,11-13 Lk 13:22-30	33rd Sunday	Prv 31:10-13,16-18, 20, 26,28-31 Ps 128 1 Thes 5:1-6 Mt 24:36;25:14-30	Dn 12:1-3 Ps 16 Heb 10 :11-14,18 Mk 13:24-32	Mal 4:1-2 Ps 98 2 Thes 3:7-12 Lk 21:5-19
22nd Sunday	Jer 20:7-9 Ps 63 Rom 12:1-2 Mt 16:21-27	Dt 4:1-2,6-8 Ps 15 Jas 1:17-18,21b-22,27 Jn 7:1-8,14-15,21-23	Sir 3:17-20,28-29 Ps 68 Heb 12:18-19,22-24a Lk 14:1,7-14	Christ the King (34)	Ex 34:11-12,15-17 Ps 23 1 Cor 15:20-26,28 Mt 25:31-46	Dn 7:13-14 Ps 93 Rv 1:5-8 Jn 18:33b-37	2 Sm 5:1-3 Ps 122 Col 1:12-20 Lk 23:35-43
23rd Sunday	Ez 33:7-9 Ps 95 Rom 13:8-10 Mt 18:15-20	Is 35:4-7a Ps 146 Jas 2:1-5 Mk 7:30-37	Wis 9:13-18 Ps 90 Phlm 9b-10,12-17 Lk 14:25-33	OTHER SOLEMNITIES, FEASTS	A (or ABC) B C		
24th Sunday	Sir 27:30-28:7 Ps 103 Rom 14:7-9 Mt 18:21-35	Is 50:5-9a Ps 116 Jas 2:14-18 Mk 8:27-35	Ex 32:7-11,13-14 Ps 51 1 Tm 1:12-17 Lk 15:1-32		Mary, Mother of God (Jan 1)	Nm 6:22-27 Ps 67 Gal 4:4-7 Lk 2:26-21	— —
25th Sunday	Is 55:6-9 Ps 145 Phil 1:20c-24,27 Mt 20:1-16	Wis 2:12,17-20 Ps 54 Jas 3:16-4:3 Mk 9:30-37	Am 8:4-7 Ps 113 1 Tm 2:1-7 Lk 16:1-13		Presentation of the Lord (Feb 2)	Mal 3:1-4 Ps 24 Heb 2:14-18 Lk 2:22-40 <b>or</b> Lk 2:22-32	— —
26th Sunday	Ez 18:25-28 Ps 25 Phil 2:1-11 Mt 21:28-32	Nm 11:16-17,25-29 Ps 19 Jas 5:1-6 Mk 9:38-43,45,47-48	Am 6:1a,4-7 Ps 146 1 Tm 6:11-16 Lk 16:19-31		Joseph, Husband of Mary (Mar 19)	2 Sm 7:4-5a,12-14a, 16 Ps 89 Rom 4:13,16-18, 22 Mt 1:16,18-21,24a <b>or</b> Lk 2:41-51a	— —

Anunciation (Mar 25)	Is 7:10-14; 8:10 Ps 40 Heb 10:4-10 Lk 1:26-38	—	—	All Saints (Nov 1)	Rv 7:2-4,9-14 Ps 24 1 Jn 3:1-3 Mt 5:1-12a	—	—
Holy Trinity	Ex 34:4b-6,8-9 Ps Dn 3 2 Cor 13:11-13 Jn 3:16-18	Dt 4:32-34,39-40 Ps 33 Rom 8:14-17 Mt 28:16-20	Prv 8:22-31 Ps 8 Rom 5:1-5 Jn 16:12-15	All Souls (Nov 2)	Any of these readings may be used:  <u>OLD TESTAMENT:</u>  Wis 3:1-9 Wis 4:7-15 Is 25:6-9  <u>PSALM:</u>  Ps 23 Ps 25 Ps 27  <u>EPISTLE:</u>  Rom 5:5-11 Rom 5:17-21 Rom 6:3-9 Rom 8:14-23 Rom 8:31b-35,37-39 Rom 14:7-9,10c-12 1 Cor 15:20-28 1 Cor 15:51-57 2 Cor 4:14-5:1 2 Cor 5:1,6-10 Phil 3:20-21 1 Thes 4:13-18 2 Tm 2:8-13  <u>GOSPEL:</u>  Mt 5:1-12a Mt 11:25-30 Mt 25:31-46 Lk 7:11-17 Lk 23:44-46,50,52-53; 24:1-6a Lk 24:13-16,28-35 Jn 5:24-29 Jn 6:37-40 Jn 6:51-59 Jn 11:17-27 Jn 11:32-45 Jn 14:1-6	—	—
Body and Blood of Christ (Corpus Christi)	Dt 8:2-3,14b-16 Ps 147 1 Cor 10:16-17 Optional Sequence: «Lauda Zion» Jn 6:51-59	Ex 24:3-8 Ps 115 (116) Heb 9:11-15 Optional Sequence: «Lauda Zion» Mk 14:12-16,22-26	Gn 14:18-20 Ps 110 1 Cor 11:23-26 Optional Sequence: «Lauda Zion» Lk 9:11b -17				
Sacred Heart	Dt 7:6-11 Ps 103 1 Jn 4:7-16 Mt 11:25-30	Hos 11:1-4,8ac-9 Ps Is 12 Eph 3:8-12,14-19 Jn 19:31-37	Ez 34:11-16 Ps 23 Rom 5:5b-11 Lk 15:3-7				
Nativity of John the Baptist (Vigil), (Jun 24)	Jer 1:4-10 Ps 71 1 Pt 1:8-12 Lk 1:5-17	—	—				
Nativity of John the Baptist (Day), (Jun 24)	Is 49:1-6 Ps 139 Act 13:22-26 Lk 1:57-66, 80	—	—				
SS. Peter and Paul, Apostles (Vigil), (Jun 29)	Act 3:1-10 Ps 19 Gal 1:11-20 Jn 21:15-19	—	—				
SS. Peter and Paul, Apostles (Vigil), (Jun 29)	Act 12:1-11 Ps 34 Tm 4:6-8,17-18 Mt 16:13-19	—	—				
Transfiguration (Aug 6)	Dn 7:9-10,13-14 Ps 97 2 Pt 1:16-19 Mt 17:1-9	Dn 7:9-10,13-14 Ps 97 2 Pt 1:16-19 Mk 9:2-10	Dn 7:9-10,13-14 Ps 97 2 Pt 1:16-19 Lk 9:28b-36				
Assumption (Vigil), (Aug 15)	1 Chr 15:3-4,15-16; 16:1-2 Ps 132 1 Cor 15:54b-57 Lk 11:27-28	—	—	Dedication of St. John Lateran Basilica (Nov 9)	Ez 47:1-2, 8-9,12 Ps 46 1 Cor 3:9c-11,16-17 Jn 2:13-22	—	—
Assumption (Day), (Aug 15)	Rv 11:19a; 12:1-6a, 10ab Ps 45 1 Cor 15:20-27 Lk 1:39-56	—	—	Immaculate Conception (Dec 8)	Gn 3:9-15 Ps 98 Eph 3:1-6,11-2 Lk 1:26-38	—	—
Exaltation of the Holy Cross, (Sep 14)	Nm 21:4b-9 Ps 78 Phil 2:6-11 Jn 3:13-17	—	—				

## ON PENANCE

The beginning of good works is the confession of our evil works.

GOD created us without us: but he did not will to save us without us. To receive his mercy, we must admit our faults (CCC 1847). As St. Paul affirms, "Where sin increased, grace abounded all the more" (Rom 5:20)—but to do its work grace must uncover sin so as to convert our hearts and bestow on us "righteousness to eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord" (Rom 5:21; CCC 1848).

The following is a summary of the Church's teaching on Penance:

- Penance is a sacrament instituted by Jesus Christ (CCC1446).
- The forgiveness of sins after Baptism is conferred by a particular sacrament called the sacrament of Penance, Confession, or Reconciliation (CCC 1486).
- The Church has the power to forgive sins (CCC 1444).
- The minister of the sacrament of penance is the priest, authorized by the bishop (CCC 1461).
- Sacramental penance is necessary (CCC 1855). We must confess our mortal sins according to number and circumstances (CCC 1456, 1457); and it is well also to confess our doubtful and venial sins as well (CCC 1458).

Sins are rightly evaluated according to their gravity. The distinction between mortal and venial sin, already evident in the Scripture, became part of the apostolic tradition of the Church (CCC 1854). Venial sin allows charity to subsist in the heart, even though it offends and wounds it. Mortal sin destroys charity in the heart of the sinner. It requires a new initiative of God's mercy and a sacrament of Reconciliation (CCC 1855). For a sin to be mortal, conversion of heart which is normally accomplished within the three conditions must together be met: grave matter, full

knowledge, and complete consent.

- Individual, integral confession of grave sins followed by absolution remains the only ordinary means of reconciliation with God and the Church, unless physical or moral impossibility excuses from this kind of confession (CCC1484).
- It must be practiced at least once a year (CCC 1457).
- On the part of the penitent are required contrition, confession and satisfaction.
- Contrition is another term for repentance: (1) through perfect contrition sins are forgiven; (2) imperfect contrition, i.e. attrition, is a sufficient disposition for confession and is salutary (CCC 1452, 1453).

Contrition, which has the first place among the aforesaid acts of the penitent, is a sorrow of the soul and a detestation of sin committed, with a determination of not sinning in the future. This feeling of contrition is, moreover, necessary at all times to obtain the forgiveness of sins, and thus for a person who has fallen after baptism it especially prepares for the remission of sins, if it is united with trust in divine mercy and with the desire of performing the other things required to receive the sacrament correctly. The holy Synod [Council of Trent], therefore, declares that this contrition includes not only cessation from sin and a resolution and a beginning of a new life, and also hatred of the old, according to this statement: "Cast away from you all your transgressions, for which you have transgressed, and make to yourselves a new spirit" (Ez 50:6); "I have labored in my groanings; I shall wash my bed every night" (Ps 6:7); "I will recount to Thee all my years in the bitterness of my soul" (Is 38:15), and others of this kind, will readily understand that they emanate from a certain hatred of past life and from a profound detestation of sins.—Council of Trent

- To receive the Sacrament of Penance worthily we must do five

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ALL of us here assembled who hear the word of life continually, know it, admire it, do all but obey it.—Ven. John Henry Cardinal Newman (1801-1900)

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TO him who remains in this world, no repentance is too late.—St. Cyprian of Carthage (c. 200-258)

things: we must examine our conscience (CCC 1453); we must have sorrow for our sins (CCC 1451); we must make a firm resolution never more to offend God (CCC 1451); we must confess our mortal sins according to number and circumstances; it is well also to confess our doubtful and venial sins (CCC 1456, 1458); and, we must perform the penance given us by the priest (CCC 1459).

True sorrow for sins includes the firm resolve not to sin again and to avoid the near occasions of sin. The Christian vocation, however, is essentially a call to growth, in fact, to holiness itself. Our purpose of amendment should include a resolve to advance, not only to avoid sin. It is very appropriate to make resolutions to pray more, to study or work better, to do more for others, God and the Church.

- Confession should be private.
- The form of the sacrament of Penance, in which its power principally resides, consists in the prayer of absolution said by the priest: "I absolve you from your sins in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit" (CCC 1449).
- The seal of the confessional is absolute (CCC 1467).
- The fruit of sacramental penance is the reconciliation with God and with the Church (CCC 1489, 1469).
- The penance the priest gives may not fully satisfy God, but it is meant to repair the harm caused by sin and to re-establish habits befitting a disciple of Christ (CCC 1460).

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CONFESSION heals, confession justifies, confession grants pardon of sin. All hope consists in confession. In confession there is chance for mercy. Believe it firmly. Do not doubt, do not hesitate, never despair of the mercy of God. Hope and have confidence in confession.—St. Isidor of Seville (c. 560-636)

## THE RITE OF PENANCE

### RECEPTION OF THE PENITENT

After entering the confessional (or other place set aside for the celebration of the sacrament), the penitent [P.] begins by making the sign of the cross:

- P. In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.  
Amen.

### READING OF THE WORD OF GOD

The priest [†] may read a short text from Scripture.

### CONFESSION OF SINS and ACCEPTANCE OF SATISFACTION

The penitent tells the priest when he/she last confessed their sins:

- P. Bless me Father, for I have sinned. It has been [ give number of days, weeks, months, or years ] since my last confession. These are my sins:

The penitent then confesses his/her sins. He/she ends with these or similar words:

- P. . . . I am sorry for these and all the sins of my past life.

The penitent then listens to any advice the priest may give and accepts the satisfaction (i.e., penance) from the priest. The penitent should ask any appropriate questions.

### PRAYER OF THE PENITENT

Before the absolution is given, the penitent is asked to express sorrow for sins in these or similar words:

- P. My God,  
I am sorry for my sins with all my heart.  
In choosing to do wrong and failing to do good,  
I have sinned against you whom I should love above all things.  
I firmly intend, with your help,  
to do penance,  
to sin no more,  
and to avoid whatever leads me to sin.  
Our Savior Jesus Christ suffered and died for us.



In his name, my God, have mercy.

—or—

O my God,  
I am sorry and beg pardon for all my sins,  
and detest them above all things,  
because they deserve your dreadful punishments,  
because they have crucified my loving Savior Jesus Christ,  
and, most of all, because they offend your infinite goodness;  
and I firmly resolve,  
by the help of your grace,  
never to offend you again,  
and to carefully avoid the occasions of sin. Amen.

—or—

Lord Jesus, Son of God, have mercy on me, a poor sinner.

#### ABSOLUTION

The priest extends his right hand saying:

† God, the Father of mercies,  
through the death and resurrection of his son  
has reconciled the world to himself  
and sent the Holy Spirit amongst us  
for the forgiveness of sins;  
through the ministry of the Church  
may God give you pardon and peace,  
and I absolve you from your sins  
in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.

P. Amen.

#### DISMISSAL

† Give thanks to the Lord, for he is good.

P. His mercy endures for ever.

#### BEFORE READING SCRIPTURE

COME, Holy Spirit, fill the hearts of your faithful and  
enkindle in them the fire of your divine love.

V. Send forth your Spirit: and they shall be created.

R. And you renew the face of the earth.

Let us pray.

O God, you instructed the hearts of the faithful  
by the light of the Holy Spirit.  
Grant us by the same Spirit  
to have a right judgment in all things  
and ever to rejoice in his consolation.  
Through Christ our Lord.  
Amen.

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#### BEFORE READING OR STUDYING

GRANT to me, O merciful God,  
that I might ardently love,  
prudently ponder,  
rightly acknowledge,  
and perfectly fulfill all that is pleasing to you,  
for the praise and glory of your Name.  
—St. Thomas Aquinas (1225-1274)

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THIS is the business of life. By labor and prayer, to advance in the grace of God, till we  
come to that height of perfection in which, with clean hearts, we may behold God.  
—St. Augustine of Hippo (354-430)

## ON DEVOTION AND REVERENCE IN PRAYER

ALTHOUGH he had been afflicted for many years by the aforesaid ailments (stomach, spleen and liver, besides an affliction of the eyes), he was so devout and reverent at prayer and divine office that he never leaned against a wall while he was praying or saying the canonical hours, but always stood erect with his head bare, though he sometimes knelt, especially when he spent the greater part of the day and night in prayer. When he was wandering through the country on foot, he always stopped when he wanted to say his hours, and when he had to ride because of his infirmities, he always dismounted to say the office.

Once [on his return from staying with Cardinal Leo in Rome] it rained very hard and for that reason and because of his infirmities he was riding. And although he was already wet through, he dismounted from his horse when he wanted to say his hours and prayed with such fervor of devotion and reverence, standing there on the road with the rain beating down on him, as though he were in church or in his cell. And he said to his companion: "If the body can eat its food in peace and quietness, although it will assuredly be food for the worms, with how much greater peace and quietness, with what devotion and reverence, must the soul take its nourishment, which is God himself."

This story is found in the Fioretti (the Little Flowers of St. Francis of Assisi), c. 1322-1328, the most popular collection of stories detailing the lives of St. Francis (1181-1226) and the early Franciscans.

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EVERYTHING pertaining to our salvation depends on God. Still, we must do all that lies in our power, make every human effort to cooperate with God.

## ON READING THE GOSPELS

BLESSED Francis had the gospels written down, so that on the days when he could not hear Mass, either because of ill-health or some other manifest impediment, he could have the gospel of the day read out to him which was read at Mass in church; and this continued until his death. He used to say: "When I do not hear Mass, I adore the Body of Christ with the eyes of my spirit in prayer as I adore it when I look upon it in church." When he heard or read the gospel, Blessed Francis would always kiss the book with great reverence.

These observations were found in the breviary that had belonged to Brother Leo (an early companion of St. Francis of Assisi). It is now kept as a relic in the church of St. Clare of Assisi.

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WHY do you not use the time when you have nothing to do for reading or for prayer? Why do you not go and visit Christ our Lord and speak with Him and listen to Him? For when we pray we speak with God, and when we read, we listen to God.—St. Ambrose (340-397)

## CONCERNING SPIRITUAL COMMUNION

ALTHOUGH actual reception of the sacrament of the Eucharist is limited to once a day, you are nevertheless at liberty to communicate in spirit every hour. [N.B. The 1983 revision of The Code of Canon Law now permits reception of Holy Communion at every Mass.] And nothing except your own negligence can prevent you from receiving the inestimable benefits to be derived from such a union with Him. It is worth noting that spiritual communion is sometimes of greater benefit to the soul and more acceptable to God than many sacramental communions received with little preparation and less affection.

When, therefore, you are properly disposed to receive the Son of God spiritually, be assured that He is ready thus to come to you as food and nourishment.

By way of preparation, think of Jesus, and after contemplating the multitude of your offenses, declare to Him your sincere sorrow for them. Then, with profound respect and unshaking faith, beg Him to condescend graciously to enter your heart; entreat Him to replenish it with grace as a remedy against its inherent weaknesses, and as a shield against the violence of its enemies. Every time you succeed in mortifying your passions, or in performing an act of virtue, take that opportunity of preparing your heart for the Son of God, as He has commanded. Then, addressing yourself to Him, fervently beg the blessings of His presence, both as the physician of your soul and as its protector. Ask Him ever to dwell within your soul and so to take possession of it as to repel its would-be destroyers.

Recall too, your last sacramental communion, and inflamed with love for your Savior, say to Him: "When, O God, shall I receive Thee again? When will that happy day return, when once again you will dwell within my heart?"

If, however, you desire to communicate spiritually with an increase of devotion, begin to prepare for it over night. Let every mortification and every act of virtue tend to make your

soul a more fitting abode for His spiritual presence.

In the morning, as you awake, meditate upon the innumerable advantages to be derived from Holy Communion. Recall that the soul regains her lost virtues, recovers her pristine purity, and is rendered worthy to partake of the merits of the cross. The very reception of the sacrament is highly pleasing to the Eternal Father, Who desires everyone to enjoy this divine gift.

Later endeavor to excite within your soul an ardent desire of receiving Him in compliance with His holy will. Let your words match the sentiment as follows:

"O Lord,  
since I am not permitted the joy  
of Thy sacramental presence this day,  
let Thy goodness and omnipotence decree  
the cleansing of my soul from the stain of sin,  
that healed of my wounds,  
I may deserve to receive Thee in spirit.  
Every day and every hour,  
fortified anew by Thy grace,  
may I courageously resist my enemies,  
particularly that failing against which for the love of Thee,  
I wage unceasing war."

Dom Lorenzo Scupoli, *The Spiritual Combat and a Treatise On Peace of Soul* (Rockford, IL: Tan Books and Publishers, Inc., 1945), pp. 169-170. First published in 1589, *The Spiritual Combat* is one of the best-known classics on the spiritual life. It is based on the maxim that in the spiritual life one must either "fight or die".

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GRACE can do nothing without the will and the will can do nothing without grace.  
—St. John Chrysostom (347-407)

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GRACE will not act without us, in order that we may will to do right. But when we will, it works along with us. Grace prevents him who is not willing, that he may will. It accompanies him who wills, lest he will in vain.—St. Augustine (354-430)

## OF SPIRITUAL COMMUNION

On November 24, 1922 the Vatican approved the following prayer for spiritual communion. The portion in brackets can be omitted.

O JESUS,  
[I turn toward the holy tabernacle  
where You live hidden for love of me.]  
I love you, O my God.  
I cannot receive you in Holy Communion.  
Come nevertheless and visit me with Your grace.  
Come spiritually into my heart.  
Purify it.  
Sanctify it.  
Render it like unto your own.  
Amen.

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THE heart of God invites all to put it to the proof. The more He gives, the more He desires to give. He loves to see the trust which makes us persist in knocking unceasingly.  
—Blsd. Placid Riccardi (1844-1915)

## THE IMPORTANCE OF PRAYER

St. Alphonsus Liguori (1696-1787)

### INTRODUCTION

I DO not think I have written a more useful work than this one, in which I speak of prayer as a necessary and certain means of obtaining salvation and all the graces we need for it. If it were in my power, I would distribute a copy to every Catholic in the world in order to show him the absolute necessity of prayer for salvation. The absolute necessity of prayer is taught throughout the Holy Scriptures and by all the holy Fathers, but too often Christians are very careless in their practice of this great means of salvation.

Consequently, there is nothing which preachers, confessors, and spiritual books should insist upon with more warmth and energy than prayer. They teach many excellent means of keeping ourselves in the grace of God, such as avoiding occasions of sin, frequenting the sacraments, resisting temptations, hearing the Word of God, meditating on the eternal truths, and other means. But what if we forget to pray? Without prayer, in most cases, all the meditations we make, all our resolutions, all our promises will be useless. If we do not pray, we shall be always unfaithful to the inspirations of God and to the promises we make him. Because to do good, to conquer temptations, to practice virtues, and to

observe God's law, it is not enough to receive insight from God and to meditate and make resolutions. We require the actual assistance of God, and he does not give this assistance except to those who pray, and pray with perseverance.

When we are in danger and tempted to disobey God's law, prayer will obtain for us God's help and we shall be preserved from sin. But if in such moments we do not pray, we shall be lost.

I hope my readers may thank God for giving them this opportunity to think more deeply on the importance of prayer; for all adults who are saved are ordinarily saved by this single means of grace. I ask my readers to thank God, for surely it is a great mercy when he gives the light and grace to pray. I hope, then, that you, after reading this little work, will never from this day forward neglect to turn to God in prayer whenever you are tempted to offend him. If you have ever had your conscience burdened with many sins, know that the cause of this has been the neglect of prayer and not asking God for help to resist the temptations which attacked you. And after reading this yourself, encourage your friends and neighbors to read it too.

### Necessity, Value, Conditions of Prayer

St. PAUL writes to Timothy: "First of all, I urge that petitions, prayers, intercessions, and thanksgiving be offered" (1 Tm 2:1). St. Thomas explains that prayer is the lifting up of the soul to God. Petition is that kind of prayer which begs for specific favors. Thanksgiving is the returning of thanks for benefits received, whereby we merit to receive

greater favors. The word “prayer” is used here in its general meaning, which includes all its different forms and purposes.

#### NECESSITY

GOD has so formed man that he himself is man's only strength. God has willed that whatever man has, or can have, should come entirely from the assistance of his grace. But this grace is not given in God's ordinary providence except to those who pray for it. So realizing on the one hand that we can do nothing without the assistance of grace, and on the other that this assistance is ordinarily only given by God to the man that prays, who does not see that prayer is absolutely necessary for our salvation? And although the first graces which come to us without any cooperation on our part—such as the call to faith or to penance—are granted by God even to those who do not pray, it is considered certain that the other graces, especially the gift of perseverance, are not granted except in answer to prayer.

In the ordinary course of providence, it is impossible for a Christian to be saved without recommending himself to God and asking for the graces necessary to salvation. St. Thomas teaches the same thing: “After Baptism, continual prayer is necessary to man, in order that he may enter heaven.”

Our human weaknesses attack us from within, and the world and the devil attack us from without. The reason, then, which makes us certain of the necessity of prayer is this: In order to be saved, we must struggle and conquer. But without the divine assistance, we cannot resist the might of so many and so powerful enemies. Now this assistance is only granted through prayer. Therefore, without prayer there is no salvation. St. Thomas, in another place, says that whatever graces God has determined to give us, he will only give them if we pray for them. “Ask, and you will receive. Seek, and you will find” (Mt 7:7).

We are beggars, who have nothing but what God gives us. The Lord, says St. Augustine, desires and wills to pour forth his graces upon us, but will not give them except to him who prays. This is declared in the words, “Seek, and it shall be given you.” He who does not seek, does not receive. St. John Chrysostom says: “As the body without soul cannot live, so the soul without prayer is dead. . . .” Prayer is also called the food of the soul because the body cannot be supported without food, nor can the soul, says St. Augustine, be kept alive without prayer.

All these comparisons used by the holy Fathers are intended to teach the absolute necessity of prayer for the salvation of everyone.

Prayer is the most necessary weapon of defense against our enemies. St. Thomas does not doubt that the reason for Adam's Fall was that he did not recommend himself to God when he was tempted. In darkness, distress, and danger, we have no other hope than to raise our eyes to God and with fervent prayers to beg his mercy to save us. Said King Jehoshaphat, “We are at a loss what to do, hence our eyes are turned toward you” (2 Chr 20:12). This also was David's practice, who could find no other means of safety from his enemies than continual prayer to God to deliver him from their traps: “My eyes are ever toward the Lord, for he will free my feet from the snare” (Ps 25:15).

“God does not command impossibilities; but by commanding he suggests you do what you can, and ask for what is beyond your strength; and he helps you, that you may be able.” This is a famous text from St. Augustine which was afterward adopted and made a doctrine of faith by the Council of Trent. We cannot believe, the saint explains, that God would have imposed on us the observance of a law and then made the law impossible to keep. God knows that alone we are unable to observe all his commands. We can do the more difficult things only by means of the greater help which we can obtain by prayer.

Why has God commanded us to do things impossible to our natural strength? Precisely for this, says St. Augustine, that we may be led to pray for help to do what we cannot do alone. It is especially difficult for someone to resist temptations against purity without recommending himself to God when he is tempted. This type of temptation often seems to take away all light; it makes us forget all our meditations and good resolutions, induces us to disregard the truths of faith, and even almost causes us to lose fear of the divine punishments. When such temptation comes, the person who does not have recourse to God is lost. Chastity is a virtue which we do not have strength to practice unless God gives it to us, and God does not give this strength except to someone who asks for it. But whoever prays for it will certainly obtain it.

St. Francis of Assisi says that without prayer you can never hope to find good fruit in a soul. Sinners wrongly excuse themselves by saying that they have no strength to resist temptation. If you do not have this strength, why do you not ask for it? That is the reproof which St. James gives them: “You do not obtain because you do not ask” (Jas 4:2).

There is no doubt that we are too weak to resist the attacks of our enemies. But on the other hand it is certain that God is faithful. St.

Paul says that he will not permit us to be tempted beyond our strength (1 Cor 10:13). We are weak, but God is strong. When we ask him for aid, he communicates his strength to us, and we are able to do all things, as Paul reasonably assured himself: “In him who is the source of my strength I have strength for everything” (Phil 4:13). The man who falls has no excuse if he has neglected to pray. For if he had prayed, he would not have been overcome by his enemies.

At the conclusion of this first part, we stress again: Whoever prays is certainly saved. He who does not is certainly damned. All the blessed (except infants) have been saved by prayer. All the damned have been lost through not praying. If they had prayed, they would not have been lost. And this is, and will be, their greatest torment in hell: to think how easily they might have been saved, just by asking God for his grace, but that now it is too late—their time of prayer is gone.

#### VALUE

IN order to understand better the value of prayers in God's sight, it is enough to read the innumerable promises God makes to the man who prays, both in the Old and New Testaments. “Call to me, and I will answer you . . .” (Jer 33:3). “Then call upon me in time of distress; I will rescue you . . .” (Ps 50:15). “I give you my word, if you are ready to believe that you will receive whatever you ask for in prayer, it shall be done for you” (Mk 11:24). “I give you my assurance, whatever you ask the Father, he will give you in my name” (Jn 16:23). There are many similar texts, but it would take too long to quote them.

God wills us to be saved. But for our greater good, he wills us to be saved as conquerors. While we remain here we have to live in continual warfare, and if we are to be saved we have to fight and conquer. “No one can be crowned without victory,” says St. John Chrysostom. We are very weak and our enemies are many and mighty. How shall we be able to stand against them or to defeat them? Let us take courage and say with St. Paul, “in him who is the source of my strength I have strength for everything” (Phil 4:13).

God knows the great good it does us to need to pray, and he permits us to be assaulted by our enemies in order that we may ask him for the help which he offers and promises to us. He is pleased when we run to him in our dangers; he is displeased when he sees us neglectful of prayer. As the king, says St. Bonaventure, would consider an officer unfaithful who did not ask him for reinforcements when his post was attacked, so God thinks himself betrayed by the man who is surrounded

by temptations and does not run to him for assistance. For he desires to help us; he only waits to be asked, and then gives abundant help. This is strikingly shown by Isaiah when, on God's behalf, he told King Ahaz to ask for some sign to prove to himself God's readiness to help him: “Ask for a sign from the Lord, your God” (Is 7:11). The faithless king answered: “I will not ask! I will not tempt the Lord,” for he trusted in his own power to overcome his enemies without God's aid. And for this the prophet admonished him. For that man is offensive to God who will not ask him for the graces which he offers.

If God were to allow us to present our petitions to him once a month, even this would be a great favor. The kings of the earth give audiences a few times a year, but God gives a continual audience. St. John Chrysostom writes that God is always waiting to hear our prayers, and that a case never occurred when he neglected to hear a petition offered to him properly. And in another place he says that when we pray to God, before we have finished telling him our requests, he has already heard us. We even have the promise of God to do this: “While they are yet speaking, I will hearken to them” (Is 65:24).

We are so poor that we have nothing. But if we pray, we are no longer poor. If we are poor, God is rich. Since we have a Lord of infinite power and infinite riches, let us not go to him for little valueless things, but let us ask some great thing of him: “You seek from the Almighty—seek something great.” “You may ask what you will—it will be done for you” (Jn 15:7).

On this point, then, we have to fix all our attention, namely, to pray with confidence, feeling sure that by prayer all the treasures of heaven are thrown open to us. “Let us attend to this,” says St. John Chrysostom, “and we shall open heaven to ourselves.” Prayer is a treasure; he who prays most receives most. St. Bonaventure says that every time a man turns to God by fervent prayer, he gains good things that are of more value than the whole world. There is no doubt that spiritual reading and meditation on the eternal truths are very useful things; but, says St. Augustine, it is of much more use to pray. By reading and meditation we learn our duty, but by prayer we obtain the grace to do it: “It is better to pray than to read: by reading we know what we ought to do; by prayer we receive what we ask.” We shall never satisfy our obligations unless we ask of God the grace to fulfill them.

The devil is never busier trying to distract us than when he sees us praying and asking God for grace. And why? Because the enemy sees that at no other time do we gain so many treasures of heavenly goods as

when we pray. This is the chief benefit of prayer, to ask God for the graces we need for perseverance and eternal salvation. A person who prays thoughtfully every day will easily see the needs of his soul, its dangers, and the necessity of his prayer, and so he will pray and will obtain the graces which will enable him to persevere and save his soul.

We ought to pray as soon as we wake up in the morning, and then continue doing it in all our needs and in setting about all our business, and most especially when we find ourselves troubled by any temptation or passion. St. Bonaventure says that at times we obtain a grace sooner by a short prayer than by many other good works. St. John Chrysostom wrote that, "There is nothing more powerful than a man who prays," because such a one is made partaker of the power of God. To arrive at perfection, said St. Bernard, we must meditate and pray. By meditation we see what we want; by prayer we receive what we want. "The one teaches what is lacking, the other assures that there should be nothing lacking."

To save one's soul without prayer is most difficult, and perhaps even impossible, according to the ordinary course of God's providence. But by praying our salvation is made secure and very easy. It is not necessary for salvation to go to foreign missions and give up our life. It is not necessary to become a hermit and fast for long periods. What does it cost us to say, My God, help me! Lord, assist me! Have mercy on me! Is there anything easier than this? These few words are enough to save us if we will be faithful in saying them. Let no one, says St. Bernard, think lightly of prayer, because God values it; and then he gives us either what we ask or what is even more useful to us. And let us understand that if we do not pray we have no excuse, because the grace of prayer is given to everyone. It is in our power to pray whenever we will to do so.

#### CONDITIONS

"I GIVE you my assurance, whatever you ask the Father, he will give you in my name" (Jn 16:23). Jesus Christ has promised that whatever we ask his Father in his name, his Father will give us. But he does so, always with the understanding that we ask under the proper conditions. Many seek, says St. James, but do not obtain because they seek improperly: "You ask and you do not receive because you ask wrongly" (Jas 4:3). So St. Basil, following out the argument of the apostle, says, "You sometimes ask and fail to receive because you have asked badly, either faithlessly or lightly; or you have requested things not fit for you,

or you have not persevered." "Faithlessly," that is, with little faith or confidence. "Lightly," with little desire for the grace you request. "Things not fit for you," when you seek good things that will not be helpful to your salvation. Or you have left off praying and have lost "perseverance." St. Thomas reduces to four the conditions required in prayer in order that it may procure its effect. These are that a man ask: 1) for himself; 2) things necessary for salvation; 3) devoutly; and 4) with perseverance.

When a man prays for his own needs, he naturally thinks of the needs of others. No soul that really loves God neglects to pray for poor sinners. For how is it possible for a person who loves God, and knows what love he has for our souls and what Jesus Christ has done and suffered for their salvation, to look with indifference on the numbers of poor souls who are living without God? God, with the help of our prayers, often sees fit to bring back the most blinded and stubborn sinners to a state of salvation by means of extraordinary graces. Therefore we should never fail to recommend poor sinners to God. A learned author says that he who prays for others will find that his prayers for himself are heard much sooner.

A man may pray faithfully for the necessities of this life, and God may mercifully refuse to hear him, because the physician knows better than the patient what is good for the sick man. When men ask God for health or riches, he often denies them because he loves them, knowing that these things would be an occasion of losing his grace, or at any rate of growing weak in the spiritual life. We do not mean to say that it is wrong to pray to God for the needs of this present life, so far as they are not inconsistent with our eternal salvation. Nor is it a defect, says St. Thomas, to have anxiety about such goods, if it is not overdone. The defect consists in desiring and seeking these material goods and in having an excessive anxiety about them, as if they were our highest good. Therefore, when we ask God for these material favors, we ought always to ask for them with the condition that they will be useful to our souls. When we see that God does not grant them, let us be certain that he then denies them to us because of the love he bears us, and because he sees that they would be harmful to the salvation of our souls.

It often happens that we pray to God to deliver us from some dangerous temptation, and yet God does not hear us, but permits the temptation to continue troubling us. In such a case, we should understand that God permits even this for our greater good. It is not temptation or bad thoughts that separate us from God, but our consent to the evil. When a soul in temptation turns to God and by his help

resists, that soul then advances in perfection, and is united more closely to God! We ought to pray in temptations, saying: Lord, deliver me from this trouble, if it is truly good to deliver me; and if not, at least give me help to resist. Be sure that God, then, really hears us and is secretly aiding us and strengthening us by his grace to resist all the assaults of our enemies. He himself assures us of this by the mouth of King David: "In distress you called, and I rescued you" (Ps 81:8). (Here we will treat the above conditions under three headings. We must pray with humility, with confidence, and with perseverance.)

#### Prayer Demands Humility

We all ought to realize that we are supported only by the power of God's grace. If this power fails us, we shall certainly fall: "Were not the Lord my help, I would soon dwell in the silent grave" (Ps 94:17). We must believe that without the aid of grace we cannot do any good work nor even think a good thought. As the eye cannot see without light, so, said St. Augustine, man can do no good without grace. St. Paul had said the same thing before him: "It is not that we are entitled of ourselves to take credit for anything. Our sole credit is from God" (2 Cor 3:5). And David had said it before St. Paul: "Unless the Lord build the house, they labor in vain who build it" (Ps 127:1). In vain does man weary himself to become a saint, unless God lends a helping hand: "Unless the Lord guard the city, in vain does the guard keep vigil" (Ps 127:1). If God did not preserve the soul from sins, in vain would she try to preserve herself by her own strength.

If a man says he has no fear, it is a sign that he trusts in himself and in his good resolutions. But such a man deceives himself, because through trust in his own strength he neglects to fear, and through not fearing he neglects to recommend himself to God, and then he certainly will fall. We should all stop scowling at the sins of other people. Rather, we should consider that we may be worse spiritually than they are and should say, "Lord, if you had not helped me, I should have done worse." Otherwise, to punish us for our pride, God will permit us to fall into worse and more shameful sins. For this reason St. Paul instructs us to work for our salvation. But how? Always in fear and trembling (Phil 2:12). The man who has a great fear of falling distrusts his own strength and therefore places his confidence in God and will turn to him in dangers. God will then aid him so that he will defeat his temptations and be saved.

And so, with the help of God, who never refuses anything to the man who prays to him with humility, he will be able to do all things: "The prayer of the lowly pierces the clouds; it does not rest till it reaches its goal, nor will it withdraw till the Most High responds" (Sir 35:17-18).

#### Prayer Demands Confidence

When did it ever happen that a man had confidence in God and was lost? Says St. Augustine: "God is not a deceiver that he should offer to support us, and then when we lean upon him should slip away from us."

David calls the man happy who trusts in God: "O Lord of hosts, happy the men who trust in you!" (Ps 84:13). And why? Because he who trusts in God will always find himself surrounded by God's mercy so that he will be guarded by God on every side and be prevented from losing his soul.

David said that our confidence in God ought to be firm as a mountain, which is not moved by each gust of wind: "They who trust in the Lord are like Mount Zion, which is immovable . . ." (Ps 125:1). It is this which our Lord recommends to us if we wish to obtain the graces which we ask: "If you are ready to believe . . . it shall be done for you" (Mk 11:24).

But what is the basis of this certain confidence of obtaining what I ask? It is the promise made by Jesus Christ, "Ask and you shall receive" (Jn 16:24). "Who will fear to be deceived, when the truth promises?" says St. Augustine. How can we doubt our being heard when God, who is truth itself, promises to give us what we ask of him in prayer? Pray, ask, seek, and you will obtain what you desire. Our Savior has taught us in the "Our Father" that we should call him not Lord but Father—"Our Father"—because it is his will that we should ask God for grace with the same confidence with which a son, when in need or in sickness, asks food or medicine from his own father.

Trusting in God's promises, let us always pray with confidence, not wavering, but stable and firm: "Let us hold unswervingly to our profession which gives us hope, for he who made the promise deserves our trust" (Heb 10:23). As it is certain that God is faithful in his promises, so our faith should be certain that he will hear us when we pray. Sometimes, when we feel spiritually dried up or disturbed by some fault we have committed, we perhaps do not feel that prayerful confidence which we would wish to experience. In spite of this, let us force ourselves to pray and to pray without ceasing, for God will not



neglect to hear us. No, on the contrary, he will hear us more readily, because we shall then pray with more distrust of ourselves and with more trust in God who has promised to hear the man who prays to him.

If we have great confidence when we pray we shall get what we want from God. The Canaanite woman did so, and she obtained all she wished from Jesus Christ. This woman had a daughter possessed by a devil, and prayed that Jesus would free her: "Lord, Son of David, have pity on me! My daughter is terribly troubled by a demon" (Mt 15:22). Our Lord answered that he had been sent first of all to aid his own people, not the gentiles. However she did not lose heart, but renewed her prayer with confidence: "Help me, Lord!" Jesus replied, "It is not right to take the food of sons and daughters and throw it to the dogs." But, my Lord, she answered, even the dogs are allowed to have the fragments of bread which fall from the table. Then our Savior, seeing the great confidence of this woman, praised her and did what she asked, saying, "Woman, you have great faith! Your wish will come to pass." For who, says the author of Sirach, has ever called on God for aid and has been neglected and left unaided by him? (2:10).

When we find ourselves weak and unable to overcome any passion or any great difficulty to fulfill what God requires of us, we should take courage and not say, as some do: I cannot, I distrust myself. With our own strength certainly we can do nothing, but with God's help we can do everything. Let us pray with David: "The Lord is with me; I fear not; what can man do against me?" (Ps 118:6). With the help of my Lord, I shall overcome. And when we find ourselves in danger of offending God, or in any other critical position, and are too confused to know what is best to do, let us recommend ourselves to God, saying, "The Lord is my light and my salvation; whom should I fear?" (Ps 27:1). We can be sure then that God will certainly give us light and will save us from every evil.

We read in John's Gospel the words of the blind man who was cured: "We know that God does not hear sinners, but that if someone is devout and obeys his will, he listens to him" (Jn 9:31). God does not hear the petition which the sinner makes when he asks while at the same time desiring to continue in sin. The same is true for the sinner who prays God to save him, but has no desire to quit the state of sin. The prayers of such men are not heard by God.

Persons who sin due to weakness, or by the violence of some great passion, but who really desire to escape from slavery to sin should ask the assistance of God. Their prayer, if it is persevering, will certainly be heard by him. In St. Luke's Gospel, Jesus, speaking of the man who

gave all the loaves he had to his friend, not so much because of his friendship as because of the other's strong request, says, "I tell you, even though he does not get up and take care of the man because of friendship, he will do so because of his persistence, and give him as much as he needs. So I say to you, 'Ask and you shall receive . . .'" (Lk 11:8-9). Continued prayer obtains mercy from God, even for those who are not in his grace. St. Jerome says that even the sinner can call God his Father if he prays him to be accepted again as a son. The prodigal son returned to say: "Father, I have sinned," even though he had not as yet been pardoned. If God did not hear sinners, says St. Augustine, it would have been useless for the tax collector to seek forgiveness. But the Gospel assures us that the tax collector prayed and did obtain forgiveness: "This man went home from the temple justified" (Lk 18:14).

St. John Chrysostom says that the only time God is angry with us is when we neglect to ask him for his gifts: "He is only angry when we do not pray." And how can it ever happen that God will not hear a soul who asks him for favors all according to his pleasure? When the soul says to him, Lord, I do not ask you for goods of this world, riches, pleasures, honors; I ask you only for your grace: deliver me from sin, grant me a good death, give me paradise, give me your love, help me to accept your will—how is it possible that God should not hear? Above all, our confidence ought to revive when we pray to God for spiritual graces, as Jesus Christ says, "If you, with all your sins, know how to give your children good things, how much more will the heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask him!" (Lk 11:13). If you, who are so attached to your own interests, so full of self-love, cannot deny your children what they ask, how much more will your heavenly Father, who loves you better than any earthly father, grant you his spiritual goods when you pray for them!

#### Prayer Demands Perseverance

Our prayers, then, must be humble and confident. But this is not enough to obtain final perseverance for eternal life. Individual prayers will obtain individual graces from God, but the grace of final perseverance requires many prayers, right up until death. The grace of salvation is not a single grace, but a chain of graces, all of which are at last linked with the grace of final perseverance. Now to this chain of graces there ought to correspond another chain of our prayers. If we, by neglecting to pray, break the chain of our prayers, the chain of graces

will be broken too, and we shall not be saved. “So be on the watch. Pray constantly for the strength to escape whatever is in prospect, and to stand secure before the Son of Man” (Lk 21:36).

Since God can give me the grace of perseverance, and really wishes to, why does he not give it to me all at once when I ask him? God does not grant it at once, but delays it, first, so that he may better prove our confidence and, secondly, so that we may long for it more forcefully. Great gifts should be greatly desired, for good things easily gotten are not valued as much as those which have been long sought for if we were already sure of persevering and of being saved, and if we did not have continual need of God's help to preserve us in his grace and to save us, we should soon forget God. God wishes to make us careful and to draw us to himself. Our continual turning to God in prayer and the confident expectation of the graces which we desire from him stimulate and inflame us to bind ourselves more closely to God!

But for how long must we pray? Always until we receive favorable sentence of eternal life, that is to say, until our death. The man who will never stop praying until he is saved will most certainly be saved. St. Paul writes that many run for the prize, but that he only receives it who runs until he wins (1 Cor 9:24). It is not enough for salvation simply to pray, but we must pray always in order to receive the crown which God promises, but promises only to those who are constant in prayer to the end.

#### EVERYBODY GETS THE GRACE TO PRAY

TAKING for granted, then, that prayer is necessary for gaining eternal life, we should also take for granted that everyone has sufficient aid from God to enable him to pray. By prayer he may obtain all other graces necessary to persevere in keeping the commandments and so gain eternal life. No one who is lost can ever excuse himself by saying that it was through lack of the aid necessary for his salvation. God in the natural order arranged that man should be born naked and lacking several things necessary for life, but then has given him hands and intelligence to clothe himself and provide for his other needs, in the supernatural order man is born unable to obtain salvation by his own strength, but God in his goodness grants to everyone the grace of prayer by which he can gain all other graces which he needs to keep the commandments and be saved.

Before expanding this theme, we will consider two preliminary points: first, that God wills all men to be saved and, therefore, that Jesus

Christ died for all; secondly, that God gives to all men the graces necessary for salvation, by which they may be saved if they cooperate with them.

#### God Wills All Men to Be Saved

God loves all things that he has created: “For you love all things that are and loathe nothing that you have made” (Wis 11:24). The person who loves cannot help doing good to the person beloved whenever there is an opportunity: “Love persuades a man to do what he believes to be good for the one he loves,” says Aristotle. If God loves all men, he must then will that all men reach eternal salvation, which is the greatest good of man, the one end for which he was created. God “wants all men to be saved and come to know the truth” (1 Tm 2:4). Therefore, the grace of God is lacking to no man; he makes it available to everyone.

If God punishes us, he does it because of our sins. He does not will our death, but our life. It is God's proper nature to save all, and to deliver all from eternal death. St. Peter says: “He wants none to perish but all to come to repentance” (2 Pt 3:9). He does not will the damnation of anyone, but he wills that all should do penance and so should be saved.

All the holy Fathers agree in saying that Jesus Christ died to obtain eternal salvation for all men. St. Jerome: “Christ died for all; he was the only one who could be offered for all, because all were dead in sins.” St. Ambrose: “Christ came to cure our wounds; but since all do not search for the remedy . . . therefore he cures those who are willing; he does not force the unwilling.” God, for his part, really wills us all to be saved; otherwise, it would not be in our power to obtain health and eternal life. He who redeemed us at such a cost does not will that we perish, for he does not purchase in order to destroy, but he redeems in order to give life. He has redeemed us all in order to save us all. We are encouraged to hope for eternal happiness by what Christ has done and has promised. What has he done? He has died for us. What has he promised? That we shall live with him.

St. Augustine left no doubt when he said, “All my hope, and the certainty of my faith, is in the precious blood of Christ, which was shed for us and for our salvation.” Thus the saint placed all his hope in the blood of Jesus Christ, because the faith assured him that Christ died for all.

### This Means Both the Just and Sinners

If God wills all to be saved, it follows that he gives to all that grace and those aids which are necessary for salvation. Otherwise, it could never be said that he has a true will to save all. God does not impose a law that it is impossible to observe. On the other hand, it is certain that without the assistance of grace the observance of the law is impossible. If God refused us grace to enable us to fulfill the law, either the law would have been given in vain, or sin would be necessary, and if necessary would no longer be sin.

As the sun sheds its light upon all, and only those are deprived of it who voluntarily blind themselves to its rays, so God communicates to all men grace to observe the law, and men are lost simply because they will not make use of it. God gives all men the graces necessary for salvation. Actual grace is necessary to overcome temptations and to observe the commandments. We must necessarily conclude that he gives all men the actual grace to do good.

Scripture, in several places, most clearly assures us that he does not neglect to assist us with his grace if we are willing to make use of it, either or perseverance if we are in a state of grace, or for conversion if we are in sin. "Here I stand, knocking at the door. If anyone hears me calling and opens the door, I will enter his house" (Rv :20). Our Lord knows that man cannot open without his grace. This is exactly what St. Thomas reaches in explaining the text. He says that God gives everyone the grace necessary for salvation, so that he may cooperate with it if he wishes. "God by his most liberal will gives grace to everyone who prepares himself." Therefore, the grace of God is lacking to no one, but communicates itself to all men. In another place he says, "It is the business of God's providence to provide everyone with what is necessary to salvation." The Lord knocks at the gate because he truly wishes to enter; if he does not enter or if he does not remain in our souls, it is because we prevent his entering or drive him out when he has entered.

"Do you not know that God's kindness is an invitation to you to repent?" (Rom 2:4) It is through his own malice that the sinner is not converted, because he despises the riches of God's goodness which calls him untiringly to conversion by grace. God hates sin, but at the same time never stops loving the sinful soul while it remains on earth, and always gives it the assistance it requires for salvation: "But you spare all things, because they are yours, O Lord and lover of souls" (Wis 11:26).

St. Robert Bellarmine writes: "Assistance to avoid new sin is always at hand for all men, either immediately or mediately" (that is, by means

of prayer), "so that they may ask further aid from God to avoid sin." In the Book of Ezekiel we read: "As I live, says the Lord God, I swear I take no pleasure in the death of the wicked man, but rather in the wicked man's conversion that he may live" (Ez 33:1 1). St. Peter says the same, "The Lord . . . shows you generous patience, since he wants none to perish but all to come to repentance" (2 Pt 3:9). If, therefore, God wishes that all should actually be converted, it must necessarily be held that he gives to all the grace they need for actual conversion.

St. Paul teaches: "God keeps his promise. He will not let you be tested beyond your strength. Along with the test he will give you a way out of it so that you may be able to endure it" (1 Cor 10:13). And Saints Augustine and Thomas go so far as to say that God would be unjust and cruel if he obliged anyone to a command which he could not keep. The former says, "It is the deepest injustice to judge anyone guilty of sin for not doing what he could not do." The latter maintains that it is considered cruelty in a man to oblige a person by law to do what he cannot do; therefore, we must by no means imagine this of God. But he adds that the case is different "when it is through his own neglect that man does not have the grace to be able to keep the commandments." And the Council of Trent teaches, "God does not command impossibilities, but by commanding, urges you both to do what you can and to ask for what is beyond your power, and by his help he enables you to do it."

### Man Makes the Choice

Assuming, then, that God wills all men to be saved, and that as far as he is concerned he gives to all the graces necessary for their salvation, we must say that all men are given the grace to enable them to pray and, by prayer, to obtain all further aid needed for observing the commandments and for salvation.

No Father is clearer on this point than St. Augustine. According to him, no one is deprived of the grace of prayer to obtain help for his conversion. Otherwise, if this grace were lacking, it could not be his fault if he were not converted. "It is he who gives us power to ask and to seek and to knock who commands us to do these things . . . He gives us commandments for this reason: that when we have tried to do what we are commanded and are wearied through our weakness, we may know how to ask the help of grace."

In making this choice, we call on the virtue of hope which is so pleasing to God that he has said he delights in those who trust in him:

“The Lord is pleased with those who . . . hope for his kindness” (Ps 147:11). And he promises victory over his enemies, perseverance in grace, and eternal glory to the man who hopes. “Has anyone hoped in the Lord and been disappointed?” (Sir 2:10) We can be sure that, though heaven and earth pass away, the promises of God cannot fail: “The heavens and the earth will pass away but my words will not pass” (Mt 24:35). St. Bernard, therefore, says that all our merit consists in placing all our confidence in God: “This is the whole merit of man, if he places all his hope in him.” The reason is that he who hopes in God honors him much: “Then call upon me in time of distress; I will rescue you, and you shall glorify me” (Ps 50:15). He honors the power, the mercy, and the faithfulness of God, since he believes that God can and will save him, and that he cannot fail in his promises to save the man who trusts in him. The greater our confidence is, the greater will be the measure of God's mercy poured out upon us: “May your kindness, O Lord, be upon us who have put our hope in you” (Ps 33:22). Hope of eternal life ought to be sure and firm in us.

The Council of Trent has expressly declared, “All men should place and keep a most firm hope in the help of God; for, unless they fail to cooperate with his grace, he who has begun the good work will finish it . . .” And long before, St. Paul had said of himself, “I know him in whom I have believed, and I am confident that he is able to guard what has been entrusted to me until that Day” (2 Tm 1:12). Herein lies the difference between Christian and worldly hope. Worldly hope is often just an uncertain expectation.

It is always doubtful whether or not a man who has promised a favor may later change his mind, if he has not already changed it. But the Christian hope of eternal salvation is certain on God's part, for he can and will save us and has promised to save those who obey his law. For this reason he has promised us all necessary graces to enable us to obey this law, if we ask for them. It is true that hope is accompanied by fear, as St. Thomas says; but this fear does not arise from God's part but from our own, since we may at any time fail by not cooperating as we should and by putting an obstacle in the way of grace by our sins. Reasonably, then, did the Council of Trent condemn those who, because they entirely deprive man of free will, are obliged to make every believer have an infallible certitude of perseverance and salvation. This error was condemned by the Council because, as we have said, in order to obtain salvation it is necessary for us to cooperate, and this cooperation of ours is uncertain and fallible. Therefore, God wills that we should always fear for ourselves when we presume on our own

strength; but we should be always certain of his good will and of his assistance to save us, provided that we ask him for it. St. Thomas says we ought to look with certainty to receive eternal happiness from God, trusting in his power and mercy and believing that he can and will save us. “Whoever has faith is certain of God's power and mercy.”

This is why the apostle James declares that the man who desires God's grace must ask for it, not with hesitation but with the confident certainty of obtaining it. “Yet he must ask in faith, never doubting” (Jas 1:6). And St. Paul praises Abraham for not doubting God's promise; Abraham knew that when God promises, he cannot fail to perform: “Yet he never questioned or doubted God's promise; rather, he was strengthened in faith and gave glory to God, fully persuaded that God could do whatever he had promised” (Rom 4:20-21).

To sum up: Our hope of salvation and of receiving the means necessary for it must be certain on God's part. The motives on which this certainty is founded are the power, mercy, and truth of God. The strongest and most certain motive is God's infallible faithfulness to the promise he has made us through the merits of Jesus Christ, to save us and to give us the graces needed for our salvation. We might believe God to be infinite in power and mercy; nevertheless, we could not feel confident expectation of God's saving us unless he had surely promised to do so. He has made that promise, but there is a condition: We must actively cooperate with God's grace and pray.

We have seen that many passages both of the Old and New Testament show the absolute necessity of prayer. This is why a sermon on prayer is preached on all the missions given by our Redemptorists. I say and repeat, and will keep repeating as long as I live, that all our salvation depends on prayer.

All writers in their books, all preachers in their sermons, all confessors in their instructions to their penitents should not urge anything more strongly than continual prayer. They should always encourage and continually repeat: Pray, pray, never cease to pray. For if you pray, your salvation will be assured; but if you stop praying, your damnation will be certain. All preachers and directors ought to do this because, according to the opinion of every Catholic school of theology, there is no doubt of this truth: He who prays obtains grace and is saved.

John Steingraeber, Editor, *Selected Writings and Prayers of Saint Alphonsus Liguori* (Liguori, MO: Liguori Publications, 1997). Italics added. Reprinted with permission of Liguori Publications.